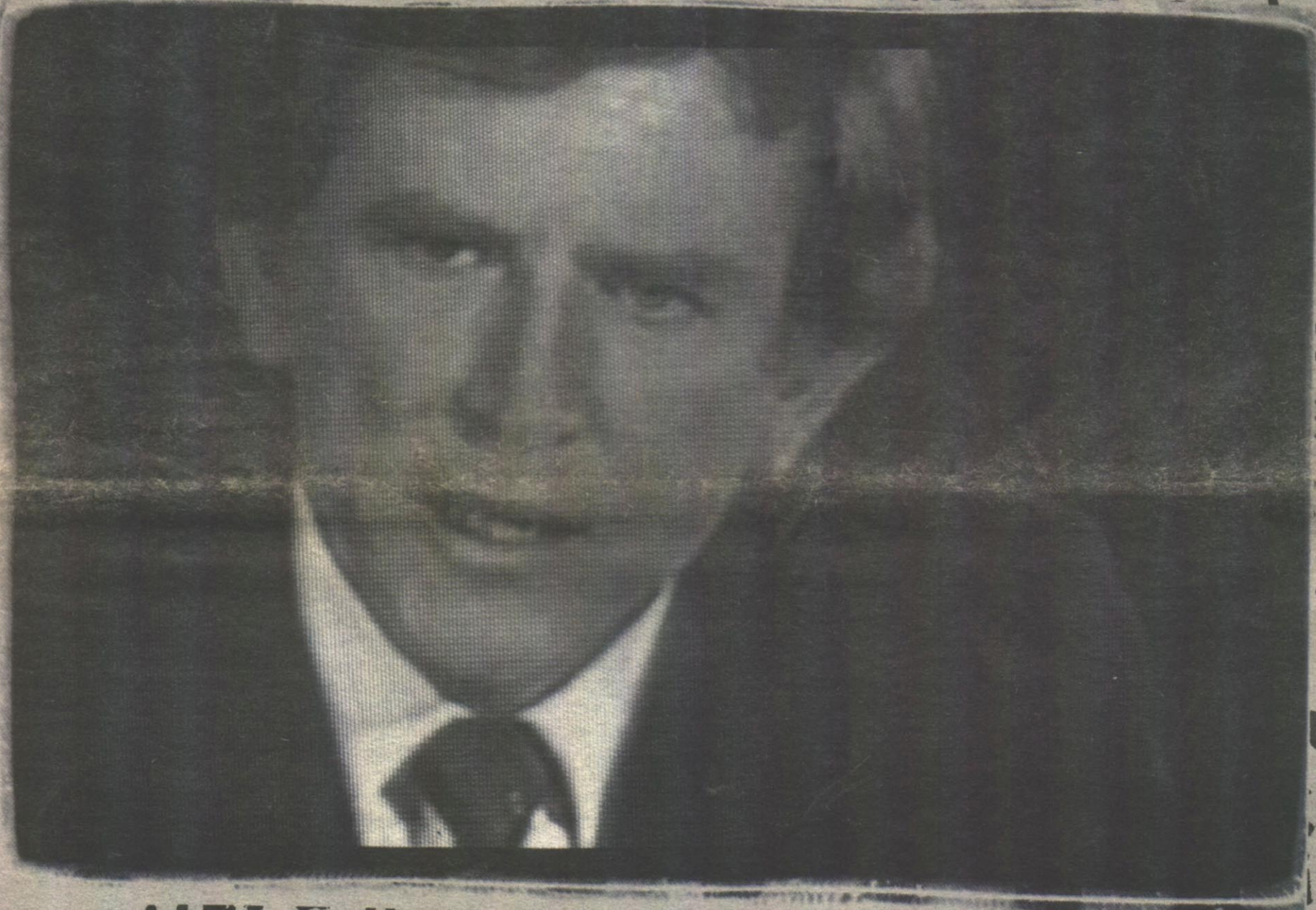
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Hate can't be imprisoned

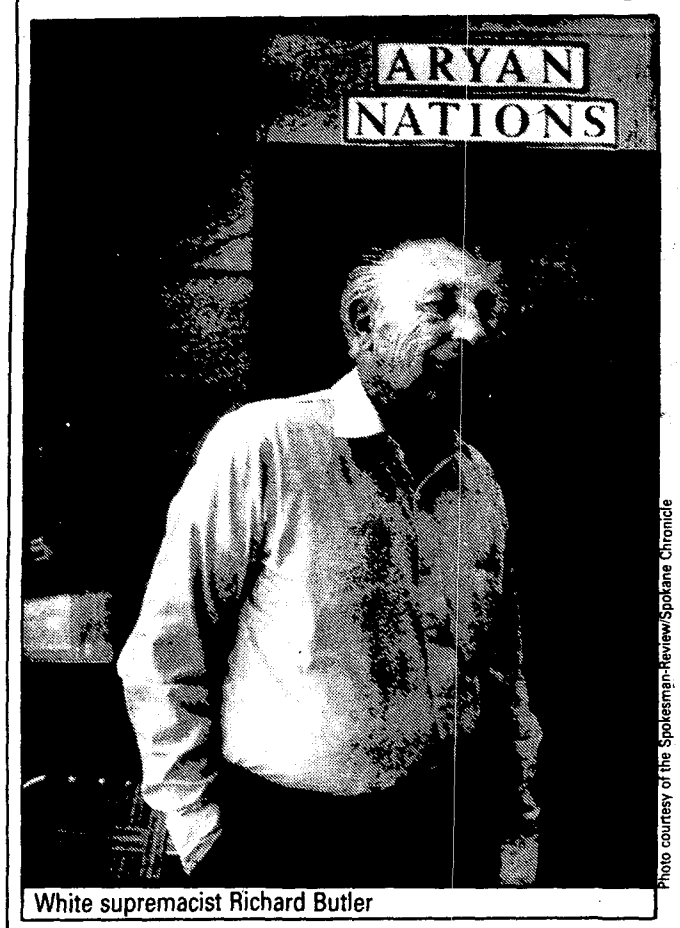


Photo courtesy of the Spokesman-Review/Spokane Chronicle

White supremacist Richard Butler

By Drew DeSilver

COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO

For the past nine years a small group of racists gathered each Sunday at a rural compound about six miles north of this snug little town. They came to hear Richard G. Butler, a 69-year-old former aerospace engineer who moved to northern Idaho in 1973 and began calling himself "Reverend." His church is the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, otherwise known as Aryan Nations.

In his sermons Butler railed against blacks, Communists, the federal government, trade unions, Masons and, above all, Jews, whom he said were the devil's seed and out to destroy the white race. In time Butler made connections with leaders of other racist groups across the country. He became friends with Robert Miles, an ex-Ku Klux Klan leader from Michigan who was pastor of his own white supremacist sect, the Mountain Church of Jesus Christ the Savior. Together they worked to unite the nation's various racist groups, with the ultimate goal of establishing a whites-only republic in the Pacific Northwest.

Last month Butler, Miles and eight other white supremacists were indicted by a federal grand jury in Fort Smith, Ark., and charged with conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. One of those men, along with four others, was also accused of conspiring to kill H. Franklin Waters, the chief federal judge in the Western District of Arkansas, and FBI agent Jack D. Knox. Their trial is scheduled to begin July 6.

The indictments were the latest in a long string of federal prosecutions of violent right-wing racists across the country. Earlier this year two leaders of North Carolina's White Patriot Party, Stephen Miller and Robert Jackson, were convicted of conspiring to blow up the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala., and kill its head, Morris Dees. And in separate trials in 1985, several members of The Covenant, the Sword (CSA) and the Arm of the Lord, a paramilitary encampment located on 224 acres of hilly terrain on the Arkansas-Missouri line, and The Order, a small terrorist group composed of ex-Aryans as well as CSA members, were convicted in Seattle and Arkansas of a variety of crimes, including murder, bank robbery, weapons violations and counterfeiting.

It was through such deeds that the Kingdom of God was to be established in the U.S.

More to come? Don Pettus, the special agent in charge of the FBI in Arkansas, said the investigation is continuing and that "there could well be other charges" filed against other white supremacist leaders.

After the 14 indictments were announced on April 24 (another grand jury in Denver indicted three of the Arkansas defendants and a 15th person in connection with the 1984 murder of Jewish radio talk-show host Alan Berg), Attorney General Edwin Meese issued a statement that read in part, "These indictments show that we will not tolerate unjust criminal activities by any group seeking to overthrow our system of government." But the protracted nature of the Justice Department's campaign against violent racist groups has raised questions about how seriously it takes the threat they represent.

Eva Sears of the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta is one of those who has doubts about the government's commitment to fight white supremacist groups. "Clearly the federal government is not doing everything it can to move against the extreme right wing," Sears said. "It doesn't seem to matter how often a person's civil rights are violated. What seemed to be needed to get them involved was violating a federal statute."

The administration's lack of commitment to racial equality both fosters and reflects a national climate that encouraged the growth of racist groups in the early '80s, she added. "There's no question that racism is no longer unfashionable. Outright, organized hate groups are proliferating, and the society as a whole has begun to accept them just as it accepts violence, crime, corruption and other social ills."

But Marvin Stern, Pacific Northwest regional director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith, said the ADL is pleased with the string of federal indictments. "I think they show the seriousness with which the government views right-wing extremists," he said.

And Pettus said the difficulty of proving a seditious conspiracy, particularly one where the alleged conspirators were scattered across the country, accounted for the length of the investigation. "It takes a long time to develop the information," he said. "They're not easy cases to put together." The investigation began in 1984, Pettus said, after the FBI uncovered a failed attempt to kill Waters and his family in December 1983. The sedition probe grew out of the investigation into the alleged assassination plot, he added.

What the grand jury uncovered was a complex of interlocking relationships between several relatively small racist groups, a network that would have made a black widow spider proud.

Estimates of the number of people involved with organized supremacist groups vary. The Center guesses that they have a combined membership of 20,000, with anywhere between three and 10 times as many sympathizers. The ADL says that number has been declining since 1984, and puts the number of Klansmen at 6,000-6,500 and neo-Nazis at 500 nationwide, with about three times as many sympathizers.

Two-edged sword: To steal a favorite Aryan Nations metaphor, the indictments of supremacist leaders and the shrinking membership of their groups is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, with the charismatic Butler and Miles in the pokey, their churches won't have the influence they once had in supremacist circles and their less-committed followers are likely to leave.

"Our experience has been that when white supremacist groups are exposed, tried, convicted and punished for their activities, their peripheral membership—those not deeply committed—will drift away," Sears said. But the diehard racists remain, those who are committed to their belief that the country must be "won back" from blacks, Jews and other "mud races," by force if necessary.

"The people who remain are the most virulent and violent core," the ADL's Stern said. "They're desperate." Added Sears, "We already know they don't have any qualms about going underground."

One of the most dangerous loose cannons untouched by the indictments was Glenn Miller, former head of the White Patriot Party who issued a "declaration of war" after his associates were convicted. Federal agents captured Miller, who had gone underground after a contempt of court citation, and three former party members on April 30 in Missouri, about 20 miles from the Arkansas border.

The only person indicted by the Fort Smith grand jury who is still at large is Louis Beam, a former Texas Klan leader closely associated with Butler, who at one point named Beam an Aryan Nations "ambassador-at-large." Beam has not been seen at white supremacist gatherings since 1984, but Pettus said the FBI believes he is in Texas.

Two prominent racists who have not been indicted are Tom Metzger, who heads the White Aryan Resistance in Fallbrook, Calif., and William Pierce, a former physics professor and leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance. Pierce's novel *The Turner Diaries* was the inspiration for The Order's 1983-85 crime spree.

No doubt other leaders will emerge, Stern said, and people like Metzger and Pierce could carry the torch for Butler and Miles. "But maybe this time they'll get the message," he added.

Members of the Aryan Nations certainly haven't. The group's recorded message still vilifies "the Marxist-Zionist Jews" for such heinous acts as supporting affirmative action and Idaho's new laws against racial harassment and paramilitary training. According to an anonymous man who answered the phone at the Aryan compound, services are still being held each Sunday, and the sixth annual World Aryan Congress will be held this July with or without Butler. Pierce, Metzger and Thom Robb, described as the Klan's "national chaplain," are among those scheduled to attend.

"We're getting overwhelming support," the man said. "All the speakers are lined up and we're all set to go. There've been no changes in the operation at all. Sorry."

Undersheriff Larry Broadbent of Kootenai County, who has tracked the Aryans since 1981, said there are only about a dozen people living at the compound and attending services. At their height in 1983, before The Order investigation, between 60 and 65 people lived there. "They're really decimated down to nothing," he said. "And with Butler in custody they're not going to be able to make many pertinent decisions."

But in an interview with the *Spokesman-Review* newspaper of Spokane a few days before his indictment, Butler said 1,100 people have taken church vows—a figure most observers say is inflated—and that three followers who live at or near the compound would take over the church if he goes to prison.

With the indictments of Butler, Miles and the others, the major leaders of the national white supremacist movement have been taken out of commission. But although the scorpion's head has been cut off, there may still be venom in the twitching tail. □

Drew DeSilver is a staff writer for the *Spokesman-Review* who is based in northern Idaho.

INSIDE STORY

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IN THESE TIMES

Inquiring minds want to know: Did the press go way too far?

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON, D.C.

On the Sunday May 3 evening news, Washington's WUSA-TV featured three stories:

- *The* Miami Herald's *report that former Sen. Gary Hart, the leading Democratic presidential contender, has spent Friday and Saturday night with a 29-year-old model and actress.*
- *The* Richmond Times-Dispatch *report that former Virginia Gov. Chuck Robb, who has been mentioned frequently as a Democratic vice presidential candidate in 1988, attended a party in Virginia Beach where someone, not necessarily Robb himself, used cocaine.*
- *Its own report that on March 28 Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry had been seen at the house of a 23-year-old model.*



Lionel Delevingne

A roadblock on the campaign trail: The most disturbing questions raised by the revelation of Gary Hart's alleged sexual liaison are not about the candidate himself but about the role of the media and the nature of political campaigning in America.

THE *MIAMI HERALD*'S REPORT THAT GARY Hart spent a weekend in Washington with Miami model Donna Rice has cast a long shadow over Hart's presidential ambitions. Yet the most disturbing questions raised by the *Herald*'s report are not about Hart and his campaign, but about the role of the press and the nature of political campaigning in America. Why have stories about the candidates' sex lives and drug habits come to loom so large in the political campaigns? Has the press acted responsibly when it has sought to ferret out adulterers or great uncles tied to the mafia?

In the debate spurred by the *Herald*'s disclosures, a few newspapers and columnists reproached the *Herald*, but most publishers, editors, columnists and reporters have taken the newspaper's side. They insist the real focus of the *Herald*'s investigation was not the candidate's sex life but the character and judgment that he would take to the presidency if elected.

The *New York Times* editorialized that the *Herald*'s story was not about "philandering" but about the candidate's "judgment and integrity." The *Washington Post* charged that Hart himself had made the question of whether he was "playing around" a "test of his general truthfulness and invited reporters to examine the evidence." *New Republic* editor Michael Kinsley saw the *Herald*'s exposé as a sign of press democracy. "We are witnessing the breakdown, at long last, of an anti-democratic conspiracy among the Washington elite of journalists and politicians...to keep information from the mass of voters."

Erwin Knoll, editor of *The Progressive* and a former Washington reporter, blamed the politicians for the press' emphasis on politicians' private lives. "I think the kind of gross invasion of privacy that is standard fare in coverage of politicians is invited by our politicians. I think of Gerry Ford on the first day he became president asking reporters in to watch him cook breakfast. Anybody who does that has sacrificed any dignity, and Hart did that."

But a review of the press' coverage of Hart over the last month reveals that the press played a significant role in focusing attention on the most private aspects of his life and that, far from inviting the press' queries, Hart repeatedly rejected or brushed them aside. While Hart, a seasoned politician, displayed reckless indiscretion, the press also may have acted indiscreetly and even irresponsibly.

Rumors about womanizing: The press' obsession with Hart's private life did not begin with the *Miami Herald*, but with the Graham family's *Newsweek* and *Washington Post*. On the week before Hart announced his candidacy, *Newsweek* ran a story in which it quoted Washington attorney John McEvoy saying that Hart is "always in jeopardy of having the sex issue raised if he can't keep his pants on."

On April 13, the day before Hart's announcement, the *Post* ran a long profile of Hart and his wife in its "Style" section. Repeating McEvoy's quote, the author, Lois Romano, wrote that "rumors of Hart's womanizing persist and could emerge as a problem for his campaign."

In her article, Romano told how Hart's resistance to reporters' personal probes only increased their interest in him. "He forces reporters to keep the pressure on, deliberately shunning the kind of personal chitchat they seek."

While interviewing Hart, Romano told him that rival campaigns were spreading rumors of his "womanizing." During a campaign flight the day after he announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination, Hart expressed his resentment about the rumors to reporters.

This led the *Post* to write again about the rumors themselves. "During the course of a long campaign day that found the Hart campaign hopscotching from Denver to Pittsburgh in a two-engine prop plane," the *Post*'s T.R. Reid wrote, "this exchange blossomed into a matter of importance within the travelling entourage. Reporters dove for their portable computer keyboards."

The next Sunday the *Post*'s Reid and Paul Taylor summarized Hart's "rocky start" this way: "In the days preceding and on the day after his announcement, several publications, including the *Washington Post*, noted that Hart was dogged by rumors of womanizing." But the reporters' use of passive tense left indefinite who was creating the rumors when, in fact, it was the press itself and rival campaigns.

Other publications were clearly queasy about the *Post* and *Newsweek*'s coverage. The *New York Times* wrote a bizarre story in which it reported Hart's charge that other campaigns were "spreading rumors about his personal life," without specifying what the rumors were about. When *In These Times*' editor Joel Bleifuss called one of the *Times*' editors to find out what the rumors were, the editor replied, "I am not going to be repeating rumors," and admitted that it had been a mistake to run the story.

Ironically, in an April 28 article the *Miami Herald*'s political editor Tom Fiedler attacked the coverage of Hart's "womanizing." Fiedler described how in his first week as a candidate Hart had tried to focus on "lofty visions" and "bold ideas," but that reporters only wanted to talk about sex. "As his campaign plane flew toward yet another stop, the press demanded to talk with Hart on the subject that had dominated reporters' conversations for days: his sex life. More precisely, they wanted to quiz him about rumors of marital infidelity. 'Anybody want to talk about ideas?' said an annoyed Hart."

Fiedler left little doubt that it was the press itself and not Hart who had initiated scrutiny of his private life. When Hart, speaking to the *New York Times*' E.J. Dionne, dared reporters who doubted his word to "put a tail on me," he was expressing his own exasperation with reporters' questions rather than a desire to have his house staked out. However impolitic and stupid a statement it was, it cannot be construed as an "invitation."

In his article, the *Herald*'s Fiedler asked, "Is it responsible for the media to report damaging rumors if they can't be substantiated? Or should the media withhold publication until they have solid evidence of infidelity? Even if sexual adventures can be proven, do the media have a legitimate interest in a candidate's sex life, assuming it doesn't interfere with doing the job?" And Fiedler pointed out that both Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy had extramarital affairs.

But when Fiedler got an anonymous tip from a Miami woman that Hart was having an affair with Donna Rice, he put aside whatever qualms he had about making Hart's sex life a major campaign issue.

Dangerous precedent: In the way it covered Hart, the *Miami Herald* may have established a dangerous precedent. In the '60s and '70s Washington politicians were occasionally the subject of sexual scandals, from Rep. Wilbur Mills' fling with stripper Fanne Fox to Sen. Edward Kennedy's Chappaquiddick to Rep. Robert Bauman being arrested for soliciting sex from a male minor. But the newspapers wrote about politicians' affairs only when they did something—such as breaking the law—that brought them into the news. Newspapers knew about but did not cover President Kennedy's affairs, and they have equally failed to cover the sexual hi-jinks of many current politicians and public officials.

The press' coverage of Democratic vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro's husband foreshadowed a new level of reportage, as did the questions about homosexuality directed at Rep. Jack Kemp by *Today*'s Bryant Gumbel. But Ferraro's and her husband's business dealings were indirectly linked to her political career; and *Today* did little more than elicit a strong negative from Kemp. But no one outside of the *National Enquirer* ever set out directly to expose a candidate's private life in the way that the *Miami Herald* set out to expose Hart's.

Afterward, the *Herald*'s executive editor Heath Meriwether justified their stakeout on the grounds that Hart had invited it. "Mr. Hart has suggested the press follow him to disprove the allegations on womanizing," Meriwether said. But besides being a misreading of Hart's statement, the statement itself, printed in the *New York Times Magazine* the same day as the *Herald*'s story appeared, could not possibly have motivated the *Herald*'s story.

Given that the story they were after could destroy a presidential candidate, the *Herald* also proceeded in an irresponsible manner. First, they did not establish the identity of the person who tipped them off about Donna Rice. If it was important to know about Hart's affairs, it was equally important to know if he was being set up by a rival campaign or party. If the public had known in 1972 that Democratic presidential candidate Edmund Muskie was driven to tears by a Nixon dirty-tricks squad, it might not have reacted as harshly to his outburst.

Second, the *Herald* did not establish beyond a reasonable doubt its most serious allegation—that Donna Rice spent all of Friday night at Hart's house. They had no one watching the front of the house between three and five in the morning, and more important, no one ever watched the back of the house, which, according to the house's builder, is "the main entrance and exit." The previous tenant of the house told the *Washington Times* that in nine years living there he had used the front door, where the *Herald* team was staked out, "probably less than five times."

Destroying frontrunners: Besides the desire for a major scoop, why did the *Miami Herald* and, to a lesser degree, the *Washington Post* go after Hart? The major dailies generally adopt an antagonistic attitude toward a political frontrunner, whether or not they share his political views. This is both be-

Continued on page 10

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INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

Now step this way

One room in the 14th-century Augustine monastery is dedicated to frontier dogs. Brek, a German shepherd, stands stuffed and mounted. The guide tells the assembled school children that Brek caught 62 people as they tried to cross the border. This scene and others in Czechoslovakia's state police museum in Prague are described by William Echikson in a recent edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*. One wall of the museum displays a series of angel-filled baroque paintings under which are tacked 444 revolvers captured from CIA agents. In another room next to a picture of the country's first Communist president is a portion of a 1949 speech in which he said that he was pleased that demonstrators in new Czechoslovakia now shout, "Long live the police. Long live national security." In the section devoted to the 1968 "counter-revolution," one of the exhibits explains, "If it weren't for brotherly help we would have ended up with civil war." And another room hosts the homemade inventions of people who were caught leaving the country. There is the hand-crafted hot air balloon. "This balloon was designed by two people trying to escape to Austria. They were watched and caught," the guide tells the children. And there is a helicopter powered by a car engine. "This was designed by an engineer from Prague," says the guide. "He, too, was caught."

"Ditty little wars" and other names

The *Los Angeles Times* is now bearing the standard—held in previous decades by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—of the liberal newspaper of record. Avid newspaper watchers have noted a divergence of editorial opinion in the big three U.S. dailies. The difference is most obvious on the issue of Central America. The *Washington Post* describes the Reagan administration's Central America policy as the "American program to support the contra cause," while the *New York Times* calls it "a policy of military pressure without a second track of negotiations." In welcome contrast, the *Los Angeles Times* blunt and honest characterizes the president's policies like this: "His dirty little war against Nicaragua," "the folly of his bloody policies in the region" and "international outlaws" who practice "state-sponsored terrorism." Editorial page editor Anthony Day agrees that the *L.A. Times* is more critical of official policy than its equivocating Eastern cousins. "That is true. We have been so since the beginning," he told *In These Times*. "We collectively know Central America pretty well and we have strong views about what the U.S. should and should not be doing there. And one thing we should absolutely not be doing is intervening militarily to overthrow the Sandinistas. This is a Latin American problem that should be dealt with by Latin Americans."

Gary voters deny Hatcher sixth term

Richard Hatcher, the first black mayor of a large American city and a national leader in civil rights and other issues, was defeated last week in his bid for a sixth term as mayor of Gary, Ind. Hatcher lost to Thomas V. Barnes, the Calumet Township Assessor who began his career 20 years ago in the Hatcher camp. Frederick Stern sent this report: Hatcher came to office in 1967, shortly before the election of Carl Stokes in Cleveland, in what was soon to become a national phenomenon—the election of black mayors in American cities. Active in civil rights in Gary, Hatcher had gone south as an attorney during the demonstrations in Selma and elsewhere. Returning to Gary, he established a coalition of impatient blacks and liberal-to-left whites in the "Steel City," a center of U.S. Steel's then-thriving industry. Hatcher's election was followed by a series of shocks for Gary. First came a rapid white flight to the Lake County suburbs, and with it disinvestment from the city's commercial areas. Then the nation's steel companies sharply cut production. U.S. Steel (now USX), which had once employed more than 21,000 in several plants, now has one plant with fewer than 6,000 employees. For many years Hatcher has been a national figure in a wide variety of civil rights, civil liberties and peace causes. He was chairman of the board of TransAfrica, a prominent organization in the attack on apartheid. He was a central figure in Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign, an involvement that cost him his position as a vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Hatcher also served as chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, an organization of black mayors.



Bob Perillo

Heeding the call: Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit (center) and retired Bishop Charles Buswell of Pueblo, Colo., were two of 98 Christian protesters arrested May 5 for trespassing and being public nuisances at the Department of Energy's Nevada Test Site. Bumbleton, president of Pax Christi USA, had invited the Christian community "to come to the Nevada desert to pray at the place where all U.S. nuclear weapons are tested." He also asked those who felt "called" to join him in "a non-violent act of civil disobedience to protest our nation's policy of testing and stockpiling nuclear weapons." Several days before the Pax Christi-initiated action—which was attended by 250 and took place on the fourth anniversary of the U.S. bishops' Challenge of Peace pastoral letter—Nye County District Attorney Phil Dunleavy said all charges against those arrested would be dropped as soon as they reached his desk. The Nye County justice system, he said, would not become a forum for the personal opinions of those who throw "adult temper tantrums." During the past six years more than 1,500 people have been arrested for civil disobedience at the Nevada Test Site.

Mexico facilitates U.S. maneuvers in Honduras

MEXICO CITY—U.S. Army helicopters ferrying troops and supplies to and from military maneuvers in Honduras routinely land in Mexico to refuel. This has prompted observers here to remark on an apparent "schizophrenia" in Mexico's Central American policy.

While U.S. Embassy spokesmen confirmed that U.S. military helicopters use Mexican airports for refueling en route to Honduran maneuvers, they would not confirm if the practice will continue during the massive "Solid Shield" maneuvers taking place this month.

A total of 50,000 U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard personnel will participate in Operation Solid Shield. During the mock war, Camp Lejeune, a Marine base in North Carolina, will repel a mock invasion and the U.S. base at Guantanamo, Cuba, will undergo a simulated evacuation. A Honduras-based part of the operation—code named Pegasus 87—will see the deployment of 7,000 Marine, Army, Navy and Air Force personnel in southern Honduras near the Nicaraguan border. Pegasus 87 will be the largest ever joint exercise between Honduras and the U.S. For the first time U.S. jet fighters and Airborne Warning and Control Systems aircraft (AWACS) will fly Honduran skies. According to *Mesoamerica*, a Costa Rican monthly of Central American news and analysis, the plan will also "include a mock large-scale amphibious invasion on Honduras' Caribbean coast."

The Mexican press reported that on February 23 four U.S. Boeing "Chinook" helicopters landed at the civilian Heriberto Jara Corona airport in the Mexican city of Veracruz. A U.S. Embassy spokesman confirmed that "four American helicopters did in fact land in Veracruz as part of the exercises in Honduras." The U.S. Defense Department mission at the embassy "processed a request and it was granted...I would think by the Mexican defense department," said the spokesman.

The Mexican Unified Socialist Party (PSUM) brought the landings to national attention, basing their information on stories and photographs in the Veracruz newspapers *El Dictamen* and *El Universal* and reports from Veracruz party members.

PSUM Veracruz committee member Rafael Covarrubias told *In These Times* that the helicopters have been landing in Veracruz "since the end of the World Cup [soccer tournament]—I think it was July 27 when the newspapers first took note of it."

Neither Mexico's Foreign Relations Secretariat nor the National Defense Secretariat has claimed responsibility for authorizing the landings.

John Saxe-Fernandez, a political science professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City and an authority on military and strategic affairs, told *In These Times* that the flights over Mexico and landings in the country "had to have been authorized from above, but we don't know if it came from the presidential level or from the National Defense Secretariat."

If the Mexican military is authorizing the landings, it comes as somewhat of a surprise, he said, because, unlike most other Latin American countries, Mexico does not have a bilateral defense treaty with the U.S. and, officially at least, cooperation between the two militaries is minimal.

"What is certain is that it shows a 'schizophrenia' in Mexico's foreign policy," Saxe said. One of the pillars of the Contadora peace initiative, of which Mexico is a principal supporter, is a cessation of all foreign military exercises six months after signing the accord. Allowing Mexican territory to be used in logistical support of such maneuvers, said Saxe, "could create a rather serious crisis in [Mexico's] Central America policy."

Cuauhtemoc Sandoval, a member of the PSUM's international relations committee, told *In These Times* that leftist parties in the National Chamber of Deputies attempted to open an investigation into the matter "because it just can't be that part of the government is backing Contadora...while another part is allowing U.S. helicopters bound for Honduran maneuvers to use national territory." But, said Sandoval, that proposed probe was quashed by the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party, which holds a 299-101 majority in the Chamber.

—Mike Tangeman

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Tambo confers with white South African ministers

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA—When African National Congress (ANC) President Oliver Tambo walked into the conference room at Lusaka's Pamodzi (Unity) Hotel on May 5, South African delegates to a World Council of Churches Conference on the search for justice and peace in southern Africa left no doubt where their votes would go if the next day's South African election was open to all races.

When chants and songs of praise finally ended, a visibly tired Tambo spoke softly at first, then with a deepening passion fueled by listeners' enthusiasm. He had come here directly from the all-night flight that concluded his five-week tour of the Far East and Europe.

The excitement reflected the most basic fact of South African politics, said Rev. C.F. Beyers Naude, the white secretary general of the South African Council of Churches. In a universal suffrage election the "overwhelming majority" would, he said, choose the ANC's jailed and exiled leaders to head their government. Tambo emphasized the reluctance with which his movement entered armed struggle in 1961 after 49 years of failed peaceful protest. The ANC leader and delegates who came from South Africa then conversed like old friends, continuing a long-running dialogue on strategies for ending apartheid. Most had neither seen nor heard Tambo, who has been exiled a quarter century and cannot legally be quoted in the South African press.

"We who are inside are weaving the carpet on which you will come home," a grandmother long active in religious movements against apartheid told Tambo.

Tambo invited criticism and debate. When a university professor complained that the "cultural boycott" of South Africa isolates anti-apartheid scholars from international progressive movements, the ANC president immediately acknowledged that "the cultural boycott is in trouble" and promised to work toward restructuring it.

Tambo disappointed a militant township youth who complained that parents and church leaders tried to prevent violent reprisals against apartheid's collaborators. The solution is political, the ANC leader insisted: organizers must unite their communities so effectively that government collaborators will be totally isolated.

The most poignant exchange came when Tambo lead the audience in applause for Naude as "a great man, a great fighter." As Tambo stepped down from the stage, the white church leader and black rebel embraced like long-separated brothers, stepped back to glimpse each other's smiling face and embraced again.

Named for an Afrikaner general and immersed until middle age in the white pro-apartheid Dutch Reform Church, Naude broke with his tradition in the '60s, joined the democratic movement and became a symbol of its aspirations for a new South Africa. The SACC leader refused to vote in last Wednesday's whites-only election.

Tambo's demeanor impressed whites who have not made Naude's pilgrimage. William Nicol, a minister of the white Dutch Reform Church, was pleasantly surprised that the ANC leader "offered not one word to encourage" reprisals against collaborators. A Lutheran pastor said he had not expected to see such a "thoughtful, scholarly" man. The two white clergymen were racial moderates from outside "the movement," invited by Naude so they could get a first-hand glimpse of the black leaders portrayed as terrorists in most of the South African press.

Against the backdrop of election-linked turmoil inside South Africa and the apartheid army's anti-civilian violence in last month's raid on Zambia (see *In These Times*, May 6), this gathering projected a rare image of a potentially peaceful and united future for South Africa after apartheid is ended.

–Steve Askin

In publication...

In its one year of existence, the Washington-based National Security Archive's goal has been to make declassified and unclassified national security documents accessible to reporters and the public. The publication of its impressive study, *The Chronology: A Documented Day-by-Day Account of the Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Contras*, as a mass paperback helps fulfill that aim.

While *The Chronology* contains much of the information found in the Tower Commission report (see *In These Times*, March 11), Malcolm Byrne of the Archive says that this new work is a "more ambitious attempt to look at the Reagan foreign policy process." The book examines policies involving not only Iran and Nicaragua but also Libya, South Africa, Afghanistan and nations in Western Europe

Price: $5.95. Published by Warner Books. Available in most bookstores.

▪ ▪ ▪

In *Double Jeopardy: Short Run Tax Savings Threaten Nuclear Safety*, Joseph Kriesberg of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project discusses how certain tax breaks provide incentives for utility companies to rush nuclear power plants into service, perhaps at the cost of safety.

Since depreciation benefits are not at present pro-rated, a utility company gains a full year's tax advantage by getting new plants in service late one year rather than early the next. Kriesberg points out that the Three Mile Island reactor was put in service on Dec. 31, 1978—and three months later suffered a partial meltdown. "This is a clear example of the implications" of utility companies' haste, he told *In These Times*.

Price: $5, Public Citizen, 215 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20003.

▪ ▪ ▪

Exploring the drawbacks of standardized testing is the mission of the *FairTest Examiner*, a new quarterly put out by the National Center for Fair and Open Testing.

According to FairTest's Nancy Murray, the *Examiner*'s purpose is twofold: first, to act as a clearing-house for those doing work in the field of evaluation and use of standardized exams; and to inform the public of the harm caused by the use of these tests in assessing intelligence, college aptitude and job ability.

The first issue, Spring 1987, provides an overview of such problems: the apparent discriminatory effects against women and minorities, the failure to accommodate intellectual nuances and the frequent misuse of test scores by educational institutions and employers.

This issue also devotes a page to ambiguous test questions. For example, a 1971 IQ test for elementary school children asks: "In New York City, it is almost impossible to find a place to ____ your car. a) drive, b) repair, c) wash, d) park, e) hide."

Yearly subscription: $15 FairTest, P.O. Box 1272, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02238.

▪ ▪ ▪

Tom Barry and Deb Preusch of the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center take on the AFL-CIO's operations in Central America in *AIFLD in Central America: Agents as Organizers*. The authors detail how the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), the AFL-CIO's Latin American labor institute, has supported U.S. military and economic activity in the region (see *In These Times*, April 15).

Most of the operations Barry and Preusch describe took place with the knowledge of only a few AFL-CIO officials; local union leaders and members have been kept in the dark. Chuck Hosking of the Resource Center says that publication of this work has, "for the first time, blown the issue wide open."

Furthermore, some repercussions can already be seen. Hosking told *In These Times* that in New York members of the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador read the study, were convinced of its claims and are now working to forestall further AIFLD adventurism.

Price $5. The Resource Center, P.O. Box 4506, Albuquerque, NM 87196.

–Lynn Travers

15. Additionally, the new use by the FDN of American-made mines adds an element of randomness and increases the danger of civilian transport on the roads I must travel.

16. I plan to remain in Nicaragua for the forseeable future. If the United States continues to train, support, finance and aid the FDN in violation of international law and the June 1986 decision of the World Court, I will be subject to personal danger to life and limb as I carry out my work.

17. The danger to my physical safety is immediate and unless an injunction is issued, I may suffer irreparable physical harm as a result of the unlawful activities of the United States government.

BENJAMIN LINDER

Sworn to before me this 7 day of September, 1986

NOTARY PUBLIC 05/08/89 notary for Oregon

'His death was policy' –John Linder

On Sept. 7, 1986, Benjamin Linder wrote a three-page deposition for the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. He described the contra attacks in the Jinotega province where he lived and wrote about the danger he faced travelling rural roads where American-made mines had killed several European development workers and scores of Nicaraguans. The final portion of that deposition is shown above. To that we add a postscript by Benjamin's brother John, who said, "The U.S. government killed my brother. The contras killed my brother. Ronald Reagan says he is a contra. My brother's death was not an accident. His death was policy." To help continue the work that Linder and others gave their lives for, the Benjamin Linder Memorial Fund for Technical Aid to Nicaragua has been established. Contributions can be sent to P.O. Box 5685, Bellingham, Wash. 98227.

Contra contradictions

"We conduct our activities and ourselves according to the highest standards of integrity, morality and honor and according to the spirit and letter of our law and Constitution.... We measure our success by our contribution to the protection and enhancement of American values, security and national interest."

–Credo, Central Intelligence Agency

Former CIA Director William Casey died last week. His family has asked that mourners forego flowers and send contributions to the William J. Casey Fund for the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters.

Banana journalism in Costa Rica

"At least eight Costa Rican journalists, including three 'top editors,' receive monthly payments from the CIA," according to the former president of the Costa Rican journalists' union, Carlos Morales. Journalist Martha Honey (one of the plaintiffs in the Christic Institute's suit against "the secret team" that allegedly worked to keep the contras armed with white-powder profits) details these allegations in a recent issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*. Morales told Honey, "There may be more [CIA-sponsored journalists in Costa Rica], but these I know for certain because most are former students of mine, and some have talked to me about it. Their job is to get into the press stories, commentaries or editorials attacking Nicaragua and sympathetic to the contras." The latest issue of the Costa Rican-based *Mesoamerica*, a compendium of Central American news and analysis, reports that people are doing their job: "The media in Costa Rica have been practicing a thorough-going self-censorship since representatives of the media began having regular meetings in April 1980 to 'coordinate' their activities. Those meetings were originally called by the U.S. Information Agency and held in its offices, though for several years the meetings have been held without visible U.S. participation. But the monolithic kind of reporting that the Costa Rican media provide, with news and analysis always following the same line and reporting the same news, has led many observers to the conclusion that there is some kind of 'central planning' involved.... In recent days this coordination became more flagrant than ever as an event that received major coverage throughout the world, the Marine-spy scandal in Moscow, received virtually no coverage at all in Costa Rica.... It is hard to imagine that the usually sensationalistic Costa Rican media, if uncontrolled, would without exception pass up such a juicy story."

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Lasting lessons: black studies in the '80s

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

THE RISING TIDE OF RACISM ON U.S. COLLEGE campuses has launched a new black studies movement. At schools across the country, African-American collegians have revived tactics from the '60s to cope with the new racism of the '80s. The demand for a curriculum that more fully acknowledges blacks' contribution to the human enterprise is prominent among these tactics.

Student leaders have charged that academia's lack of commitment to such inclusive scholarship reveals its fundamental reluctance to grapple with the institutional racism in which it is still mired. In their view, the failure to confront that entrenched attitude has set the stage for this current burst of public bigotry.

EDUCATION

A common thread: Thus the atmosphere was heady with vindication when the African-American Studies Association (AASA) presented its 10th annual Black Studies Conference at Olive-Harvey College here, April 9-11. "Today's black students are finally beginning to learn the lesson we've been teaching for many years," said Armstead Allen, founder and coordinator of the conference. That lesson, explained Allen, is "no matter where we go or what we do in this society, blackness is our common thread. Sometimes it takes a touch of overt racism to remind us of that."

For 10 years the AASA's annual conferences have examined that thread with extraordinary dedication and rigor. And, although national interest in the subject declined during the association's decade of conferences, those involved in the annual gatherings acted as if the discipline were still in its heyday of the early '70s. Black studies' most influential theorists were showcased regularly and the quality of participants was consistently high. Allen is credited for much of that success.

"We began these conferences in 1978 with the idea that black folks needed some kind of mechanism to keep the black predicament in the forefront of our concerns," Allen said. "We sought to refine black studies as a definitive school of thought with a clearly defined mission." He noted that the theme of this 10th conference—"The Black Studies Mission"—was also the theme of the first.

From the AASA's perspective, the mission of black studies is threefold: to generate a body of knowledge that comprehensively explores the black experience, as well as the forces that affect it; to serve as a focus for the development of black leadership; and to provide a forum to link academic and community concerns. For those who think of black studies merely as an attempt to put a few black faces on the stage of civilization, such a mission may seem overly ambitious. But the AASA framework only scratches the surface of what some advocates have conceived as black studies' goal.

"The challenge of black studies is to block and reverse the progressive Westernization of our consciousness," explained Maulana Karenga, visiting professor of black studies at the University of California, Riverside. Karenga is a leading black nationalist theorist, and is often referred to as the intellectual father of black studies. He's a strident supporter of the discipline and has delivered scholarly papers on many aspects at several AASA conferences.

Karenga told *In These Times* that his vision of black studies remains unchanged from the '60s. "I thought black studies should be attempting to break the monopoly the oppressor has on our minds, by bringing to a halt black peoples' progressive adoption of Eurocentric views. I was talking about a challenge that's not just historical or political, but epistemological also; black studies should present a total challenge to Europe's cultural hegemony." Karenga's conception of the discipline represents the cultural nationalists' view and is not unanimously popular.

"There've always been ideological differences in the black studies movement," Allen explained. "The nationalists, like Karenga, pushed a more philosophical approach, while the more explicitly socialist faction advocated increased political involvement." He said the conference has attempted to steer a course between the factions.

The birth of black studies: The so-called black studies movement grew out of the political unrest of the late '60s and the prime movers were militant black students attending predominantly white institutions. In the historically black schools, which until 1967 educated the vast majority of black college students, there was a modest protest tradition stretching back to the '20s. But that was a decidedly tame species of protest. In 1960, a sit-in demonstration in Greensboro, N.C., by four black students from North Carolina A&T triggered a new level of protest, and black schools across the South caught the spirit. Most historians now locate that 1960 sit-in, rather than the 1964 Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, as the beginning of the '60s student movement.

After 1967, the character of black student protest began to change. The urban uprisings in this country's major cities that occurred between 1964 and 1967 provided graphic evidence of black America's growing frustration with the status quo. Students shared that frustration and many were moved by the cathartic power of the violence. Society's response to those "long hot summers" taught many black students also that angry action sometimes could produce more results than reasoned attempts at moral suasion.

Another reason for the change in the mode of protest was the increasing number of black students attending white institutions. As late as 1964, blacks were less than 3 percent of all college students, and they were heavily concentrated in black schools. Between 1964 and 1970, however, black college enrollment doubled, with much of that increase occurring in white institutions. In many ways black students were unprepared for the culture shock of attending a white school. And the schools, also unprepared, did little to help the students assimilate more smoothly.

"Those who thought black studies would lose its relevance...are absolutely wrong."

At the same time, the civil rights movement was in a dramatic state of flux. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael became chair of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), called for "Black Power" and began speaking on college campuses throughout the U.S. The rise of the Black Panther Party, the growing influence of the ideas of Malcolm X and other black nationalists and the decline of non-violence as a strategy provided the ideological foundation for the black studies movement.

When the discipline was born in the late '60s, support almost was unanimous. White administrators at most major institutions concurred with black advocates who answered yes to these major questions:

- Is race a proper organizing principle for the curriculum?
- Is the special study of the black experience intellectually valid?
- Is it educationally responsible?
- Is it socially constructive?

What's more, many justified the discipline as a means to educate whites about the historical trials and triumphs of African-Americans. By the end of the peak period of black student protest, between 1968 and 1971, more than 13,000 schools had at least one black studies course in their curricula and 500 had full-scale black studies programs, according to a 1974 study in *Black Scholar*. Data compiled in 1985 by the National Council on Black Studies shows 525 black studies programs, 150 of which are housed in their own departments. Excluding historically black institutions, bachelor's degrees are offered by 82 public and 72 private schools, and at least 16 universities offer black studies graduate degrees.

More relevant now: But without the active interest of the black student population, and without much institutional commitment, many of these programs have been coasting. The shift toward a more vocational emphasis for higher education has also dampened enthusiasm for black studies curricula. By the early '80s the characterization of the discipline as a relic of the '60s had become increasingly widespread.

"Those who thought that black studies would lose its relevance to black students, since it lacks a vocational thrust, are absolutely wrong," said Jabulani Makalani, associate director of admissions at Northwestern University. "At the elite universities that educate this country's leadership strata the emphasis on a broad, liberal arts education has never changed. If you want good leadership, you have to be very careful about how it is educated. Good leadership has to be steeped in the cultural traditions of its people with a broad base of educational experience. We must do the same for black leadership." Makalani said the need for that kind of education is even greater now than it was in the '60s. He applauded the AASA's sustained attempts to improve the quality of black studies as a rigorous discipline.

In addition to educating leadership, black studies provides a social-cultural context for many black students who are woefully bereft of knowledge about the struggles that gained them access to the institutions they now attend routinely. Tonya Mitchell, president of the Black Student Alliance at racially-troubled Vanderbilt University in Nashville, said that because of that ignorance of the past, many of today's black college students were unprepared for these new expressions of racism.

"After the '60s, blacks became comfortable with their situation," said the 20-year-old senior. "We thought we were moving toward a more racially peaceful society." But, she added, a series of racial incidents on her campus and talks with students at other schools have convinced her that this society may be moving in the opposite direction. □

Past not forgotten: Posters of '60s civil rights leaders at an '80s rally.



Mel Rosenthal

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The robotics industry discovers it's missing some key components

By David Moberg

CHICAGO



William Warren

Men and machines at the recent Robotics Industry Association trade show in Chicago.

ROBOTS CAN NOW GUIDE A BRAIN SURGEON'S probe with unsurpassed accuracy, explore ocean depths, repair nuclear reactors and wash windows of the tallest buildings—either enhancing human efforts or relieving danger and drudgery. But the reality of robotics is still more mundane. Dominating the annual Robotics Industry Association trade show here last month were the welders, spray-painters and devices for moving widgets from A to B that are the industry's meat and potatoes.

Year by year robots can do more of these basic industrial tasks and do them faster and more precisely, with more intelligence and perception. Yet bugs still plague the machines and, even more so, their use in factories. For example, while one exhibit smoothly demonstrated the relatively new ability of robots to assemble the many tiny and delicate parts of an electronic circuit board, using built-in vision to inspect the result, a few steps away another machine lacking rudimentary vision was relentlessly and futilely driving screws into a hole already filled with a screw.

Four years ago, coming out of the recession that so dreadfully hammered U.S. manufacturing, the U.S. robotics industry suddenly took off. "People were selling sizzle," one robot salesman says, and managers placed orders for robots as if they were summoning magic elixirs for competitive woes. But many of the applications didn't run very smoothly and didn't deliver desired results. Caution set in. And now capital spending generally has been cut back, especially in the auto industry, which uses half of all robots in the U.S.

After several years of more than 20 percent annual growth, robot sales in the U.S. flattened out last year, and industry experts expect a drop of 30 percent next year. The slump for the fledgling industry could have grave effects since imports are already rising—now 30 percent of the domestic market, 80 percent of those from Japan—and sales in Japan and several European competitors continue to grow rapidly.

Almost before it has started, the robotics industry seems on its way to being a victim of many of the same private and public policies that have undermined other U.S. industries. But its story also has some particularly telling lessons about the role of manufacturing and technology's social meanings.

Leader of the pack: Japan has more than half of the world's 110,000 operating robots—defined as a "reprogrammable, multifunctional manipulator"—and half of the world market. But Sweden is another major exporter with as many robots per thousand workers as Japan. U.S. industry uses 25,000 robots, about the same as Western Europe combined.

But Japan and, for the most part, Europe have concentrated on evolution of simple, reliable, comparatively inexpensive robots. U.S. producers, according to a new study on the robotics industry prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce, have emphasized more complex, expensive and hard-to-maintain robots. Partly that reflects government policy. In Europe and especially in Japan government agencies sponsor technical research and commercialization. But according to the Commerce study nearly all U.S. government robotics research is oriented toward space and military needs. "In general," the study reports, "U.S. government-sponsored robotics research programs have not focused on commercial applications of the new technology."

But the biggest problems stem from the outlook of business users. Even robotics salespeople agree, U.S. manufacturing executives primarily see robots as a way to eliminate workers, or "direct labor." This deep-seated, misguided approach not only blinds them to the greatest potential from robotics but also leads them to giant snafus in implementation. One of the classic cases is General Motors' new Cadillac plant in Hamtramck, Mich., one of the world's most automated auto assembly plants. There, more than a year after it opened, production was half of what was expected because much automated and robotic equipment malfunctioned.

"The problem was a machine-oriented mentality of the managers," says UAW research associate Peter Unterweger. "Americans think we can solve problems that are complicated by throwing technology at them."

Instead of the slow, steady, "minimalist" Japanese approach, GM tried to do everything at once and "leapfrog" over the Japanese. "GM tried to get rid of the people," Unterweger says. "What the Swedes do is get rid of people, too, but they don't design the system to get rid of labor, but so that workers who are in it are most effective."

The importance of workers: Despite some exceptions, automated factories generally require far more skilled labor even as they eliminate many routine, semi-skilled jobs. But some U.S. companies, such as GM, have devoted too little effort to training workers for their new, more complex tasks. "Workers are more important than ever in the automated factory," says Harley Shaiken, professor of work and technology at the University of California, San Diego. "Many U.S. firms have been slow to recognize that. They've viewed robots as alternatives to dealing with workers."

"That's an old-fashioned attitude, to get rid of people," argues Lennart Djupmark, a veteran Swedish manufacturing executive who is now secretary of the International Federation of Robotics. "That's not really the prime objective of robots. Many things are more important. Direct labor is only 5 to 10 percent of total cost in manufaturing. Quality and flexibility to meet customer demands without building up huge inventories is more important. In the past the focus has been on eliminating direct labor, and that's why operations have failed."

"Workers are more important than ever in the automated factory. Many U.S. firms have been slow to recognize that. They've viewed robots as alternatives to dealing with workers."
–technology expert Harley Shaiken

Djupmark also chides U.S. business for a "binary, stop-and-go" attitude toward technological change and for looking for immediate returns. "You can't expect robotics to have immediate payoff," he says. The Japanese have taken the long-term view. They'll sacrifice profits of next year for the long term. Same for the Swedish and German firms.

"You believe too much in brute force [in the U.S.], that if you install a lot of sophisticated machinery everything will work," Djupmark adds. Better to spend $10,000 on redesigning a product than $100,000 automating production of a bad design, he suggests. Successful automation and use of robots requires a total rethinking of manufacturing, from product design on through the whole production system, not just sticking a couple of robots into an existing operation. "Many times the changes [in redesign] are so big there is no need to automate any longer. Manufacturing and assembly become so simple," he says. For example, a Phillips plant in Sweden so simplified the TV remote controls it was making that it decided it didn't need the robots it had planned to buy. Similarly, robotics executives argue that the biggest savings from robots can come through cutting overhead—an average of 45 percent of manufacturing costs—rather than direct labor.

TECHNO TRENDS

It could be worse: Despite the threat of job loss from robots and related programmable automation, the alternative is likely to be worse. Indeed, computerized manufacturing provides an alternative to the flight of U.S. business overseas. Recently Motorola brought some electronic assembly back from east Asia after an Adept assembly robot proved more efficient.

Yet half of the U.S. robotic marketers import the basic robot from Japan or elsewhere and simply make a few modifications—a premature example of what *Business Week* called the "hollow corporation." Japan had an advantage of close interaction—often within a firm—between manufacturing and development of the new robotics industry. Proliferation of robots—and the health of the new high-tech robotic industry—is tied to the level of investment in manufacturing, which the Commerce study says is "dismally low" in the U.S. Japan's booming electronics and auto industry consumers have strengthened their hold on robotics manufacture.

The weakness of the U.S. robotics industry ultimately is linked to the social use of technology in this country. As Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Leo Marx has argued, Americans in the 18th century often viewed technology as serving political liberation. But gradually technological power and efficiency became ends in themselves without a guiding political vision. "In this century," he wrote, "the technocratic view of progress was enshrined in Fordism and an obsessive interest in economies of scale, standardization of process and product and control of the workplace."

Now even from a narrow economic standpoint—and certainly in social terms—that technocratic vision fails the American economy. Ironically, a machine-centered worldview doesn't even work well for the new machines—the robots. It certainly doesn't for workers. "It's not as if you have technological issues, then over there you have social issues," Shaiken argues. "Either you deal with the social issues up front, or the technology doesn't work. They're solidly linked." □

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Horror is contra war's subterranean battlefield

By Alan Gottlieb

LEON, NICARAGUA

NICARAGUA



©Marcelo Montecino

Many Nicaraguan children have spent their whole lives in the terror of non-stop war.

THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES WERE RETURNING to this city from a Sunday at the beach in late March when the emergency sirens sounded. The eerie wailing began in the dark, just a few moments after a city-wide power blackout.

At once the residents froze in their tracks, listening to the sound. Then they began scurrying about, anguished looks on their faces, lamenting the war's apparent arrival in Leon. People with battery-powered radios tried in vain to tune to a local station, but since the city was without power there were no broadcasts. The few families lucky enough to have telephones made calls, trying to determine what had happened or was about to happen.

Finally, word came through: there had been no contra attack. Instead a terrible fire was burning out of control through a block of houses in one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. Mayor Tomas Donaire had ordered the sirens started to call firefighters to the scene.

"I realized when I did that that it was going to make people nervous," Donaire said the next day. "The sirens bring back bad memories of the 1979 insurrection [when Leon was bombed several times by Somoza's air force]. But I felt I had no choice."

Repeated civil defense drills in schools and work places have taught residents that when the sirens sound four times and then pause it signifies an air attack, but three sounds and a pause indicate a fire or other lesser emergency. Despite this training, as the residents of Leon scrambled for their radios and telephones, many were sure that the three blasts they heard foretold an air attack.

The near-panic reaction in Leon provides a clear example of how nervous people in Nicaragua are after almost nine years of non-stop war. The psychological effects of the ceaseless pressure are profound and, in some cases, debilitating.

Oddly, people in cities far from the war front seem more distressed by the situation than do stoic residents of the northern mountains and central jungles where violence and death have long been a daily reality. This has become increasingly true in recent weeks, as the contras have carried out small-scale acts of sabotage in and around several major cities, including Managua.

The sabotage campaign has to date consisted of small teams, reportedly parachuted into the heart of the country with CIA assistance, blowing up high-tension electricity towers. These acts have occurred in and around Managua, Esteli, Matagalpa and elsewhere in the country's most populous regions.

The bad news: Perhaps more important, the contras have intensified their psychological warfare campaign through Radio Liberation, a powerful AM station that has been beamed into Nicaragua from Costa Rica since early this year. Its signal is received with almost perfect clarity throughout the country from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night.

Contra leaders, most notably Adolfo Calero, can be heard most nights on Radio Liberation, warning of upcoming attacks on "strategic targets" within major cities. During its broadcast of the Marvin Hagler-Sugar Ray Leonard fight, Radio Liberation repeatedly warned that the FSLN was endangering civilians by placing them near military targets. In addition, the station recited an almost endless litany of bad news about Nicaragua, some of it containing a grain of truth, some of it patently absurd.

Nonetheless, the combined tactics of limited sabotage and perpetual propaganda do take a toll on urban populations, according to Nicaraguan psychologists and religious leaders. "Contra propaganda is very strong, not only through Radio Liberation but on the Voice of America and several Costa Rican and Honduran stations people here listen to," said Father Jose Luis Burget, a pro-government Catholic priest in Leon. "Hearing so much of this creates a lot of doubts in people's minds, and I am afraid this will go on as long as there is a war here."

Psychologist Melania Vargas, who counsels students at a Leon high school, acknowledged that "we hear what they [the contras] say and we know that at any moment the aggression could affect us." Nonetheless, she believes that extensive civil defense training has prepared people to act rationally in case of an attack. "Most of us have assimilated the war over the years," she said. "The war is part of us now."

Maria Amparo Mendoza, who teaches psychology at the National Autonomous University in Leon, said both training and "revolutionary morale" keep people calm. "Through traditional methods of psychological analysis, one would probably conclude that people here must be suffering from stress-related problems," she said. "But we think Nicaragua is different. The majority of people are preserving their mental equilibrium."

Also, Mendoza said, the contras diminish the impact of their propaganda by stretching the truth to an outlandish degree. "People live the reality and they know what it is," she said. "Times are hard and food is scarce, but people aren't close to starving, as the contras like to claim."

Still, some of the contras' most outrageous rumors have caused public unrest. Last fall a clandestine contra radio station began spreading a rumor about children being found dead in the gutters of Managua's poorest barrios, syringes stuck in their arms or necks. The Sandinistas were so short of blood for their soldiers, the story went, that they were resorting to sucking the blood out of poor children to supply their hospitals.

As absurd as this story must sound to an American, the rumor stirred violence in at least one Managua barrio. A woman was accused by a mob of being a "bloodsucker" and would have been lynched had the police not saved her. *Barricada*, the official FSLN newspaper, printed an article shortly thereafter urging people to keep level heads. Eventually, the rumor subsided.

Taking a toll: Nicaragua's desperate economic situation also exacts an enormous psychological toll. As inflation continues unabated and salaries fail to keep pace, thousands of salaried workers are leaving their jobs in despair because professionals who once earned a prosperous living now find themselves earning less than uneducated street vendors. Both daily newspapers are full of ads soliciting skilled workers for government offices.

"I can't afford to work for a salary when I have to feed my family," said one worker who recently quit his job. "I can make a much better living selling things on the street. It seems this situation will never end." Psychologists acknowledged that this is a problem, but claimed it affects only about 10 percent of the population.

According to Mendoza, a recent study in Managua found that while 80 percent of those polled described the economic situation as "difficult," only 10 percent called it "insupportable." It is this 10 percent, she said, who are likely to develop severe psychological problems as the war drags on. "They get depressed, they see no way out, and they cease being productive," she said. Most of these people, Mendoza said, are on the lower end of the salary scale—teachers, security guards, janitors—but the formerly well-to-do are not immune.

The psychologists insisted, however, that no widespread psychological problems exist in Nicaragua. "There is no general sense of anguish here," concluded Vargas. "We see a variety of the normal, common problems, and some stress-related difficulties. But our sense of preparedness keeps us calm, and our belief in the revolution keeps us strong."

But Mendoza and Vargas found it difficult to explain away the panicked reaction to Leon's emergency sirens. Indeed, the sirens clearly sounded three times. But residents of at least one neighborhood forgot their training in the heat of the moment. □

Alan Gottlieb is *In These Times'* correspondent in Nicaragua.

The contras have been carrying out small-scale acts of sabotage around Managua and other major cities. At the same time, they have been intensifying their psychological warfare campaign. Nicaragua's desperate economic situation also takes a toll on the nation's collective psyche.

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Brazil and the banks: lost in a money maze

By Ken Silverstein

RIO DE JANEIRO

WORLD ECONOMY

AS RECENTLY AS OCTOBER BRAZIL WAS THE pride of the international business community. The Cruzado Plan, officially unveiled in February 1986, had introduced a new monetary unit and had included a price and rent freeze.

The plan reduced inflation from an annual level approaching 300 percent to the low double digits, the economy was growing at a rate approaching 10 percent and the country was routinely racking up trade surpluses of $1 billion per month. Brazil's creditors had even agreed to partially reschedule the country's $108-billion debt, the world's largest, despite the government's refusal to allow International Monetary Fund (IMF) monitoring of the economy.

Now, only seven months later, the country is living through the worst political and economic crisis of its two-year-old civilian government. Since the Cruzado Plan was quietly ditched in January, inflation has returned to record levels, strikes are rampant and real wages have plummeted 30 percent in the past four months.

The government's lack of action in confronting this situation has created a mood of almost complete cynicism among the population at large. *"Eu acredito"* (I believe), the slogan launched with the Cruzado Plan last year, has unofficially been replaced by *"Eu acreditei"* (I believed).

It was within this context that President Jose Sarney announced on February 20 that Brazil would suspend interest payments on the nation's $67-billion debt to private bankers. Sarney has since said that Brazil cannot pay more than $6-7 billion in interest payments this year, roughly half of last year's level, and needs approximately $4 billion in new loans as well.

Although the timing of the decision was unexpected, the action itself was not. Sarney had little choice, both economically and politically, in declaring the moratorium. Brazil is simply unable at present to meet its payments. In the past year foreign reserves have been more than halved, to less than $4 billion. As interest payments during the first half of this year would have totalled $7 billion, and the trade surplus during this period is expected to fall below $2 billion, at least a temporary suspension was seen as inevitable.

Hugo Castelo Branco, minister of industry and commerce and one of the more conservative government ministers, recently stressed this point. After flatly stating that Brazil could not meet its payments this year, he added, "There is no real obligation to pay when there is no money to pay."

The government's financial shortfall is largely the result of dwindling trade surpluses that shrank from $1.3 billion last May to $136 million this past March. Although imports have remained stable, there has been a steep decline in exports.

This is partially explained by the progressive impact the Cruzado Plan had on consumer spending. The economy's rapid growth during most of 1986 produced significant gains for almost all sectors of the economy.

Though the consumer spending spree that resulted was largely confined to the middle class, the poor benefitted as well. As a result, goods destined for export were redirected toward the internal market. It is still possible, though becoming rarer, to see goods stamped for export on supermarket shelves.

This helped create a 13 percent drop in exports and demonstrates the limitations the debt places on even mildly progressive economic policies.

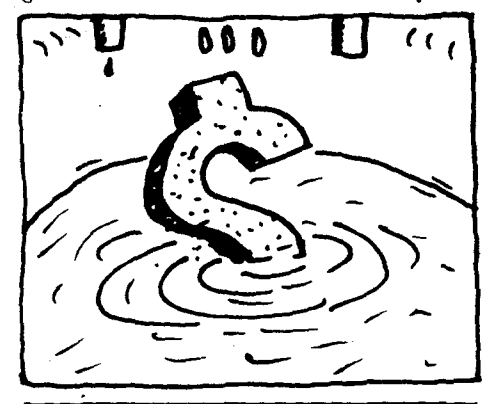
Rebellious assembly: Political reasons help explain the timing of the announcement as well. Despite a huge majority in the new Constituent Assembly elected last November, the government feared it was losing control of its own legislators. The assembly is currently writing a new constitution as well as fixing the mandate of President Sarney.

Sarney would prefer a six-year term, remaining in office until 1990. With the economic decline, however, his credibility and legitimacy have been largely undermined. In the days before the moratorium was announced, the newspapers were full of rumors that the assembly had settled on a four-year term with direct elections in 1988.

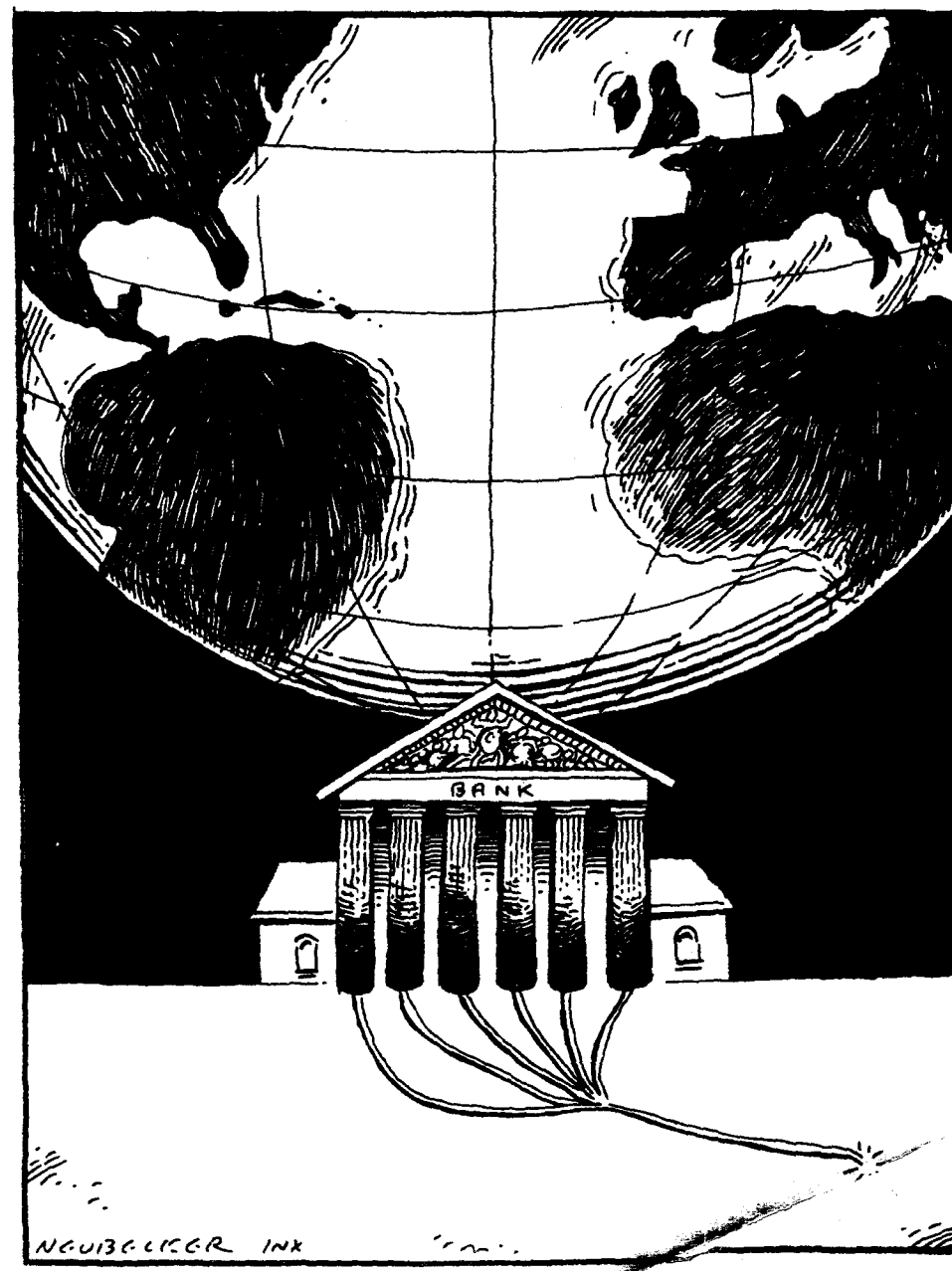
Other signs of rebellion had appeared as well. Most significantly, a bill to increase popular participation—making any public initiative capable of gathering 30,000 signatures automatically subject to discussion in the assembly—was approved in mid-February. This proposal was strongly opposed by conservative forces both inside and outside the government.

Many analysts believe that the moratorium is, at least in part, a response to these political problems. By conceding to one of the opposition's major demands the government is hoping to regain control of the assembly, according to the analysts.

Oddly enough, although the moratorium is supported by almost everyone, it has not resulted in an upsurge in support for the government. The business community has voiced approval for the measure, but only as a regrettable necessity.



It's unlikely that banks will retaliate for Brazil's suspension of interest payments. "Brazil will go down the drain, but they'll come with us," warns one Brazilian expert.



Robert Neubecker/INX

According to Rolf Lochner, president of the Bayer Corporation and head of the Brazilian-German Chamber of Commerce, "It isn't pleasant, but it is evident that the government needs time to adjust the economy."

Between a rock and a hard place: The unions, the parties on the left and the popular movements, for years the major proponents of a moratorium, currently find themselves in an awkward position. While they are generally supportive, there is great skepticism about what the president really intends to do. Sarney's speech announcing the moratorium made no attempt to rally popular support for the action, never calling into question the origins of the debt or its legitimacy in being contracted by a military government.

In addition, Brazil has suspended only payments on the 70 percent of the debt held by private banks. The government will continue to make payments on loans owed to multilateral organizations and foreign governments.

"The moratorium is not proof of the government's strength. The only thing it shows is that the government is broke," says Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula), president of the small but influential Workers Party (PT).

In mid-April the government accepted one of the left's key demands and set up a Senate commission to conduct a full, case-by-case audit of the debt to determine how it was contracted and where the money was spent.

Eduardo Suplicy, a PT economist, said in a recent telephone interview that part of the debt was contracted illegally and should be declared "illegitimate." Suplicy believes that illegal commissions and kickbacks were paid and that only the part of the debt that contributed to economic growth should be repaid.

The government's new commission has not served to ease suspicions on the left, particularly after Dilson Funaro, the country's once powerful economic minister, resigned his position on April 26. Funaro, who had steadfastly rejected any economic advice from the IMF, was strongly disliked by Brazil's international creditors. The *Wall Street Journal* quoted one unidentified American bank officer as saying, "We'll certainly be more optimistic now about negotiating a settlement. There was pretty much a widespread perception that, with Mr. Funaro, one couldn't get anywhere."

The new economic minister, Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, is considered a centrist and is expected to be much more conciliatory toward the banks. Bresser has already devalued the cruzado by 8 percent and further measures are expected in order to prop up the declining trade surplus.

High stakes: Despite this development, the upcoming negotiations are sure to be tense as the stakes are high on both sides. Citibank alone, the country's largest private creditor, has nearly $5 billion in outstanding loans to Brazil. The *Jornal do Brasil*, an influential Rio daily, estimates that the suspension of interest payments, if unresolved, will cost Citibank 20 percent of their overall 1987 profits, Chase Manhattan 23 percent and Bank of America 34 percent.

Since Brazil suspended payments two months ago, the banks have quickly signed rescheduling agreements with five large debtor nations. These settlements, particularly Argentina's April 15 decision to accept a proposed $30-billion restructuring deal, served to isolate Brazil by removing the

Continued on page 22

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Hartburn

Continued from page 3

cause of the watchdog role that newspapers adopted in the wake of the Vietnam War and Watergate and because political reporters have a certain vested interest in creating a more equal and interesting race. But the reason they feel justified in investigating a candidate's private life as well as his political past is due to changes that have occurred in politics and the press over the past 35 years.

Since the early '50s, if not before, political parties have become less important. Voters, rather than party professionals, choose presidential nominees; and the candidates raise money themselves and rely largely on the media rather than on armies of party workers to reach voters. This has made the press far more important. Newspapers and television have tremendous influence over the public's opinion of candidates. And the candidates themselves try to reach the public through the media.

American politicians have often tried to run on personality and image rather than platform. No presidential campaign of the last three decades could match William Henry Harrison's 1840 presidential bid for sheer superficiality and for playing on the voting public's credulity. But corporate capitalism's focus on consumption and leisure has shifted the public's interest from a candidate's ability to kill Indians singlehandedly to his piety or his prowess in bed. Television's visual impact has also put a premium on candidate imagery. Television, writes political scientist Gary Orren, "has personalized news coverage, focusing on the manner, motivation and emotions of public figures."

Opinion of a candidate's private life has always influenced voters. Former New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller prevented himself from becoming president when he divorced his first wife to marry "Happy" Rockefeller, and Sen. Edward Kennedy probably destroyed his chances of becoming president at Chappaquiddick. In 1980 the Carter campaign very effectively used campaign commercials portraying Carter as a trustworthy family man to inject Chappaquiddick into voters' consciousness.

But the growing absence of mediating political institutions, from political parties to labor unions, has created an average voter who views political candidates as characters in an evening TV drama. Politicians have become personalities. And the politicians themselves have devoted increasing effort to creating pleasing images of themselves—often at the expense of the truth. Under Roosevelt, 5 percent of the White House staff worked in public relations; under Reagan 25 percent do.

In this sense, the press' concern with candidates' private lives simply reflects broader changes in American politics. But the press has become an important actor on its own in campaigns and has contributed to candidates' definition of what is important as much as the candidates themselves. "The way we choose presidents is a national disgrace," *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis wrote last week. "That is not the press' fault. But the *Miami Herald* stakeout of Gary Hart shows how the press can make it worse."

Personal and political: There are two justifications for the press' preoccupation with candidates' private lives. The first is the belief that a candidate's marriage and friendships bear on what kind of a president he will be. One Washington journalist, who didn't want to be identified, invoked the verities of the '60s counterculture. "The structure of personal lives is political," he said. "You can fall back onto the [former *New York Times* executive editor] Abe Rosenthal view that it is irrelevant or you can try to understand."

The *New Republic*'s Kinsley sought to justify directly the relevance of the *Herald*'s findings. "The same juices that drive [politicians] to run for office drive many to horse around and may drive some to express themselves in other ways, like starting wars. This needs watching. They don't call it power lust for nothing."

But Kinsley's pop analysis proves the reverse. If there were a simple and direct link between philandering and warmongering, then the press would indeed be justified in exposing instances of adultery. But the philanderer Franklin Roosevelt was certainly no more warlike than the faithful Truman or Nixon. There is, indeed, a connection between persons' private lives and their political behavior, but it defies the present state of psychology, not to mention the efforts of political pundits and reporters.

The other justification—also stated by Kinsley—is that reporters have no right to conceal what they know. The *Herald*'s exposé was a contribution to political democracy in the same way as was the *Post*'s exposure of the Watergate scandal.

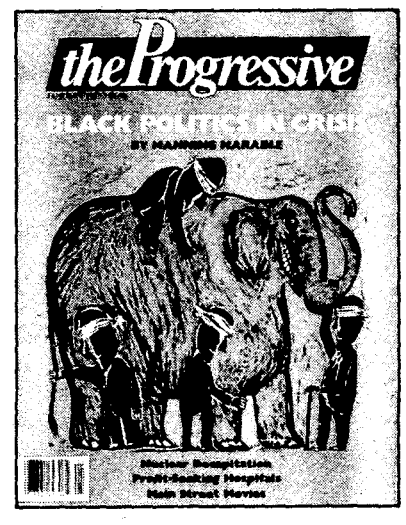
But the press does not simply mirror reality. It must make choices about what it covers and does not cover. And because the precise links between the personal and the political are unclear, there is a good reason for not covering most political candidates' private lives except when information about their private lives bears directly and clearly on what they would do in office.

Some publications currently operate under standards of decorum that deprive the public of important political information. For instance, the *Washington Post* chose not to report its finding that Carl "Spitz" Channell and other contra fundraisers had funnelled some of the money raised to their male lovers, even though the fundraisers' sexual attachments were what explained the disappearance of the money. The *Post* reportedly was afraid of invading Channell's privacy, but was not afraid of violating Hart's. (See *In These Times*, April 22.)

The press cannot evade its role in shaping the political debate. It can either reflect the priorities of image-hungry candidates and of a public that feeds on sexual scandal, or it can attempt to prevent what is tendentious and merely sensational from dominating political discussion. To exclude the subject of reporters' gossip from the front pages may risk charges of elitism. But it can equally be argued that democracy cannot survive if our political campaigns become re-runs of *Dallas* and *All My Children*. □

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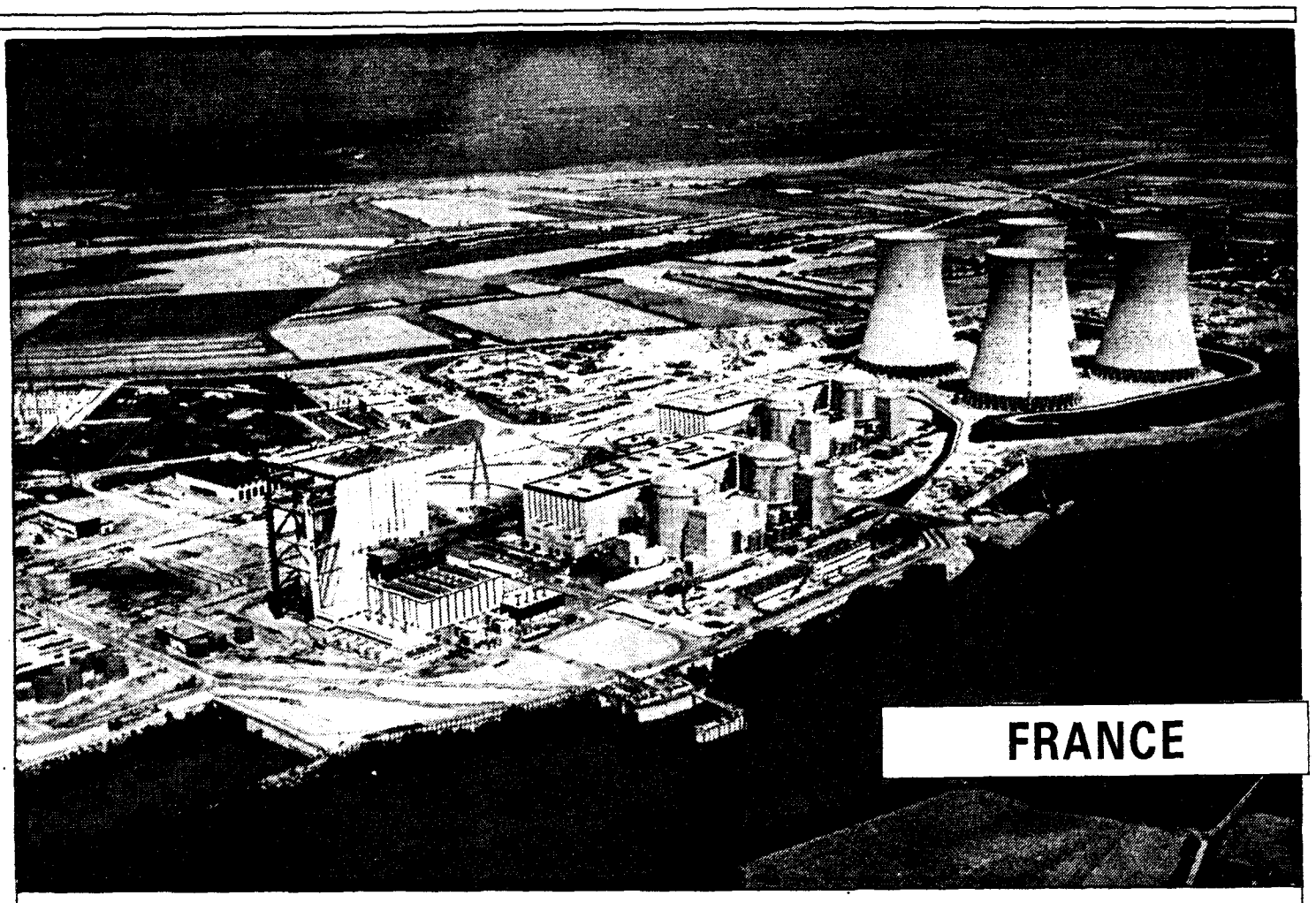
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France has 45 nuclear plants, second only to the U.S. But the industry is suddenly in trouble.

As a sodium leak grows, so does the nuclear debate

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

A MYSTERIOUS MONTH-LONG LEAK OF liquid sodium in the Superphenix fast breeder reactor in France's upper Rhone valley has sent a silent chill of doubt through the French establishment: has France perhaps made a terrible mistake putting all its bets on nuclear technology?

Superphenix at Creys-Malville on the Rhone, some 30 miles upstream from Lyon, is the world's largest fast breeder reactor. Last year it began producing what has turned out to be Europe's most expensive electricity for EDF, the French power monopoly. At the end of March a sodium leak was spotted that had been going on for some time. After a fortnight of frantic searching, 50 technicians still had not been able to find the source of the leak, which was continuing at the rate of 500 kilos (more than 1,000 pounds) per day. They are still working on it.

Fortunately, the leak was from one closed reservoir to another. Sodium, a liquid metal used to cool the core of fast breeder reactors and transmit heat, bursts into flame on contact with air or explodes on contact with water. Nuke-watchers remember that in 1974 an enormous sodium fire destroyed the Soviet fast breeder at Shevchenko and let loose an unknown quantity of radiation.

It was also in 1974 that French, Italian and West German power companies set up the NERSA company to build fast breeders. France's current defense minister, André Giraud, who was then in charge of the French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), insisted that the Superphenix was not to be merely an experimental prototype but the beginning of a new industry.

The 1973 oil crisis clinched the arguments of the powerful nuclear lobby at the CEA. Nuclear power was the way to ensure France's independence from Arab oil sheikhs. And to avoid an alternative dependence on imported uranium, the final guarantee of national independence would be plutonium, homemade in French fast breeders. In those days experts were still projecting energy demand as an almost vertical upward curve. Now it has flattened out. Other countries have long since concluded that the fast breeder is a non-starter—too complicated to master, too inherently dangerous to be worth the risk.

British, Belgian and Dutch power companies joined the Italians and Germans in helping finance the project. The Italian state power monopoly ENEL and energy research institute ENEA built 35 percent of the nuclear boiler and 42 percent of the reactor block. But all willingly let the French have the honor of having the thing on their territory. The active German anti-nuclear movement has called attention to so many safety problems that a smaller breeder reactor at Kalkar in West Germany—part of the same program—has not yet been put into operation and may never be.

Ten years ago at Creys-Malville, a big protest demonstration against the fast breeder was dispersed by police grenades that killed high school teacher Vitale Michalon and maimed several other demonstrators. Superphenix was built on the scene of the bloodshed.

Louis Puiseux, a former Electricité de France (EDF) engineer who has written several books criticizing France's nuclear policy, points out that silencing the anti-nuclear movement was a precondition for making nuclear power economically viable. In other countries, anti-nuclear protests indirectly slowed nuclear programs by forcing costly safety improvements that make nuclear power too expensive to be interesting to power companies. Thus the cost per kilowatt hour of nuclear power plant construction has risen in Germany to 166 percent of what it costs in France.

Back to the stone age: In France as nowhere else in the West, the "nucleocrats" succeeded in discrediting and marginalizing the anti-nuclear movement. One of them, Pierre Pellerin, told the Paris Rotary Club in 1979 that the choice was between nuclear energy and going back to living like cave men. He suggested darkly that criticism of atomic energy was a mysteriously financed plot against civilization as we know it.

Pellerin went on to be named head of the official safety agency, the "Central Service of Protection against Ionizing Rays," which responded to the Chernobyl disaster by undertaking to "prove there is no problem." Other countries issued radioactivity counts. France announced only that radioactivity was "slight." Thus while the rest of Europe was counting becquerels and throwing away spinach crops, the French were provided with official assurances that all was well, and no disturbing statistics.

While anti-Soviet crusaders Yves Montand and André Glucksmann railed at French ecologists for failing to protest against "Kremlin secrecy" over Chernobyl, Pellerin's service refused to pass along to the French media information provided by the Soviet health ministry.

France has 45 operating nuclear power plants, second only to the U.S., and depends on nuclear reactors for 70 percent of its electricity.

So why does France alone continue to subsidize dangerous and money-losing projects? A big part of the answer lies in the nature of the centralized and secretive French state. Starting in the '50s, a small, determined elite of technicians such as Giraud and, above all, Pierre Guillaumat, an intelligence officer who headed the CEA before becoming De Gaulle's defense minister, managed to push through an ambitious military and civilian nuclear program. There was no public debate. Political leaders were not necessarily aware of the implications of the projects they hastily approved. De Gaulle was simply one of them.

The association of the nuclear "*force de frappe*" with the name of Gen. Charles de Gaulle was useful both to De Gaulle, who needed something prestigious to console his military men after the loss of Algeria, and to the nuclear establishment. The general's sponsorship gave French nuclear weapons a priceless aura of grand strategy and patriotism.

The leak is worrying a country that gets 70 percent of its electricity from reactors.

Military motives were at the origins of both France's and Israel's nuclear programs, which worked in close secret partnership in the '50s. Superphenix is of special military interest.

Lucky France: In his recent book *Crepuscule des Atomes*, Louis Puiseux cites Army Gen. Jean Thiry as rejoicing several years ago that "France will be able at relatively low cost to produce atomic weapons in great quantities as soon as the fast breeders provide in abundance the necessary plutonium. What luck for Europe and for France!" And Socialist member of parliament Georges Benedetti told the National Assembly in 1983: "The fast breeder alone is capable of supplying enough plutonium 239 to meet the development needs of our tactical nuclear force."

Attitudes toward nuclear power have never followed political categories of left and right. When doubts arose recently over the leaks at Superphenix, Socialists wavered, an extreme right National Front leader called for a shutdown, and Francois Duteil, head of the Energy Workers Federation of the Communist-led General Confederation of Labor (CGT) declared that "refusing fast breeders means accepting economic stagnation and lasting unemployment...." Duteil said the CGT would not let the leak "serve as a pretext for going backward."

In other European countries, anti-nuclear movements have grown up on the left in an atmosphere of anti-authoritarianism and anti-militarism, encouraged in their opposition to nuclear power not only by the physical dangers but also by fear of the type of highly policed society required by such a dangerous type of industry.

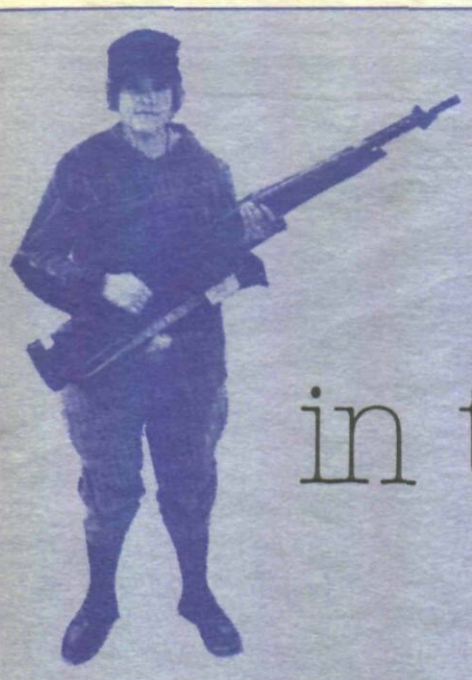
In France, such a conjunction between left-wing sensibilities and an anti-nuclear movement has not happened. The doubts that are now visibly growing are without political color. They are strategic: a nuclear power plant upstream from Paris could make France particularly vulnerable to terrorist nuclear blackmail. Or economic: the damn thing costs too much; EDF will never get its money back.

To keep the faith whe others are faltering, the CEA would like to build a second Superphenix in France. But EDF, already heavily in debt, is balking at the cost. Energy needs have leveled off, and EDF is faced with the prospect of producing more electricity than it can sell, despite having already heavily promoted all-electric home heating to build a market for nuclear electricity.

Environment Minister Alain Carignon said recently that the time of nuclear "arrogance" is over. When Superphenix was begun 10 years ago, "no debate was possible," he said. But now Carignon predicted a growing debate that "will transcend political parties."

On June 20 the European anti-nuclear movement is gathering in Paris. For the first time, Paris may pay attention. □

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Gunning for respect in the Pentagon press corps

By Alisa Joyce

THE DAY BEGINS WITH CROISSANTS AND KINetic kill vehicles. The pastry crumbles as I grapple for my pen, brow furrowed over new terms, signalling frantically with the other hand for more coffee from a circling waiter.

Reporters are called upon with first-name familiarity—"Ed, you're next"—and the speaker responds with answers like, "PD 59 did not commit us to an enduring C-cubed-I." It is a breakfast full of experts on defense, all men, talking in a jargon familiar only to the initiated.

It's another rocket launch of a day; as the coffee begins to defog the senses, members of the Pentagon press corps absorb wisdom about the technological feasibility of Star Wars from a former secretary of defense. We have gathered at 8 a.m. around a long banquet table at a Washington, D.C. hotel—18 of the top defense writers stretched down either side, all sounding as if they've spent decades immersed in the arcane and abstract terminology of ballistic missiles, fast-burn booster rockets and kinetic kill. I'm the only woman at the table, as usual, and have to settle my morning features into a mask of military severity as I scramble to unravel the terminology and logic of defense.

There is nothing more challenging than to be thrown into something utterly unknown at 8 a.m. and be expected to develop expertise by noon. That axiom is especially true when the "something" is defense—the very definition of an "old boy network"—and you're a woman.

When I first entered the Pentagon building 10 months ago with a new job as the defense reporter for a TV news program, I was determinedly nonchalant. I waved my press pass at the security guard and trotted purposefully down the endless beige hallway, my heels clicking and echoing out of place. It's just another government institution, I told myself, but still felt there was something more ominous and particularly forbidding about the insides of that immense geometric symbol.

Down Correspondents' Corridor, on the way to the briefing room, there is a picture board on the wall with 36 photos of permanent Pentagon correspondents. Some faces I recognized, most names I knew. Among the 35 there were two women. The men, in my imagination, looked like veterans of many wars and many more stories. I imagined them all ducking under bullets, asking battle-hardened questions, spotting minute flaws in strategy or design in a split-second of observance....

Documenting a dud: My first defense story was about the Bradley Fighting Vehicle—the very name resonating with masculine assurance. In researching this flawed piece of expensive machinery already exposed in the press and pummelled by Congress, I exhausted two yellow legal pads and every defense expert in Washington with my questions. I travelled up and down Pentagon halls, up and around Capitol Hill and through endless files to educate myself on the basics of weaponry and tank warfare.

When the piece was finished I nervously shared with my Pentagon briefer the synopsis I had crafted from exhaustive briefings and endless explanations about the Army's case for the Bradley. He said he had never seen a more clear and concise discussion of Bradley, and he asked to keep a copy. After the story aired we received a letter from the Army's chief of staff commending us on our "balanced" treatment of the issue, saying, "Ms. Joyce, in particular, exhibited a remarkable understanding of the complexities of modern Army doctrine and tactics."

A woman in the Pentagon press corps is often "odd-man-out" of the defense beat's "old-boy" network.

The praise was astounding given the almost total ignorance with which I approached the story. I began to realize the particularly advantageous position of a woman in the defense field—the slightest "grasp" of, or accurate stenographic reporting on strategy and tactics, is unexpected; a starting point of naiveté and blind curiosity makes it essential that the most basic and assumed questions be answered and explained.

As a woman reporter, I approach the real meaty defense stories a bit differently than a man. The basic logic of the exercise needs to be laid out, the abstraction of policy made concrete. Having never served in the military, having never been genetically enthralled by the concepts involved, I have never been educated in or even adequately exposed to the basic premises that operate in the defense establishment. Basic premises like the rationale for nuclear deterrence, like the planning behind a 600 ship navy, like the concern for "conventional troops," as opposed to nuclear forces—what war are you fighting? What exactly are you planning toward? What can an immense navy really do these days? Do you really envision conventional ground troops battling it out in the trenches of Europe? What is all this for?

Or, in other words, can you dispell the sneaking suspicion I have that we are talking about a bunch of boys and some gigantic toys?

"Women can get away with asking questions no one else will ask. They can get away with murder," laughs Dina Rasor, an investigative reporter who now directs the Project on Military Procurement. "There's a very patronizing attitude," she explained. "They humor you."

Rasor has had ample experience sparring and jousting with the Defense Department as the pre-eminent outside investigator of military waste and fraud (see *In These Times*, Oct. 16, 1985). That experience illustrates how women in the field share similar advantages and disadvantages with women covering the field.

She started the Project on Military Procurement in 1982 after accumulating a wealth of defense sources through her work investigating Pentagon fraud and waste for the National Taxpayers Union. Now when sources within the Defense establishment want to leak information about flaws in design or construction of a new weapons system, Rasor takes the information, analyzes it and eventually releases it to Congress and to the media. Her group now functions as a kind of unofficial watchdog of military procurement. In the beginning the Pentagon was not at all ready for the attack.

Outflanked on the powder puff front: "They had never been assaulted like this," says Rasor, describing the reaction to her early revelations about weapons systems gone awry in the development process. "They called me the 'Powder Puff Front,' and used to say things like, 'isn't she cute?' to people asking questions about my information. Their strategy backfired—they only saw the pack-



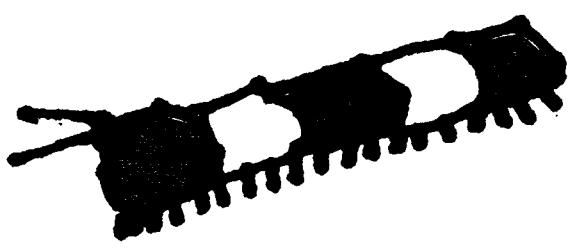
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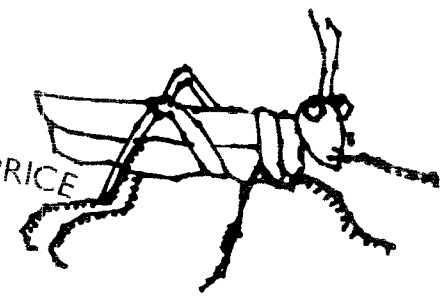
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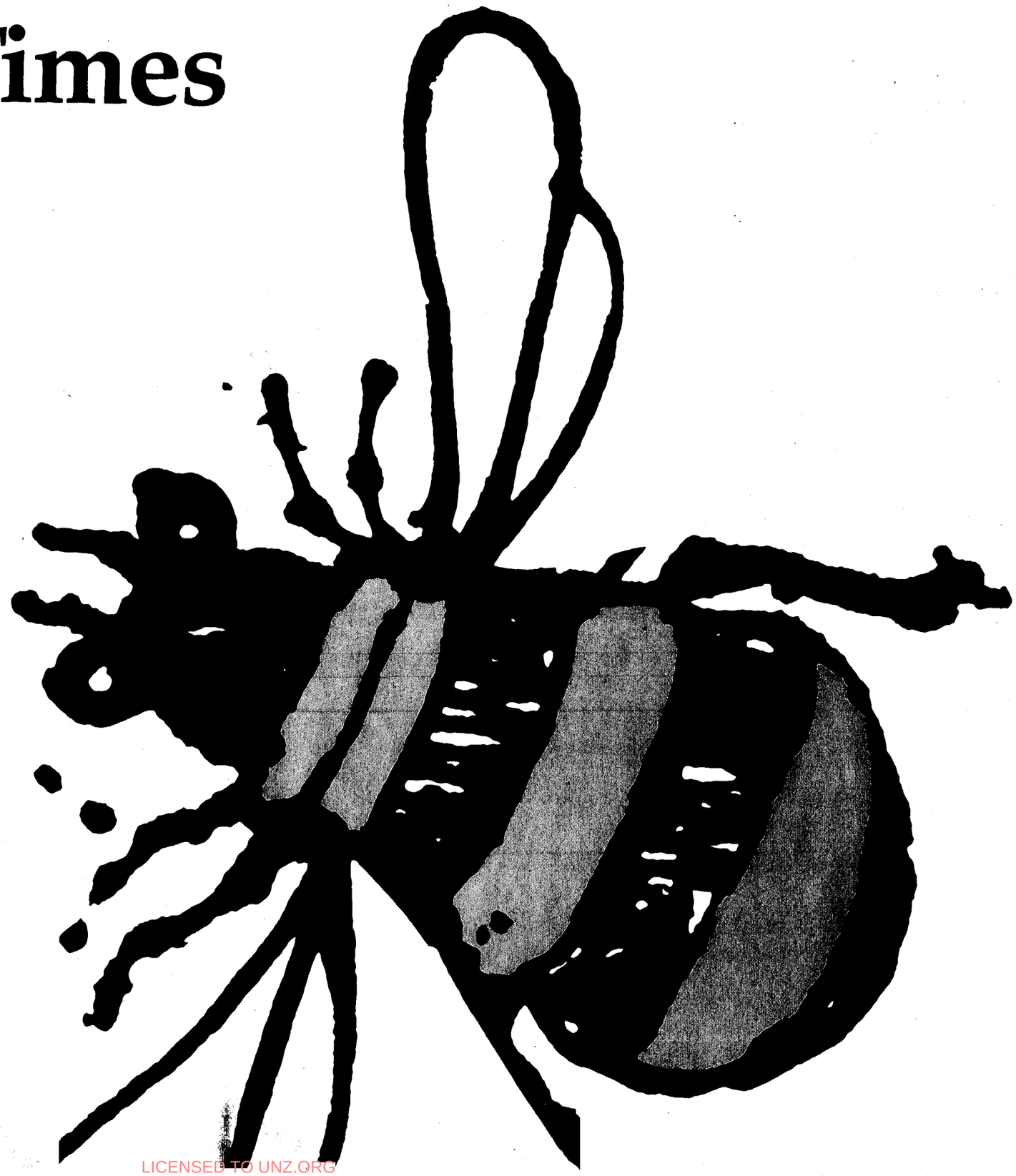
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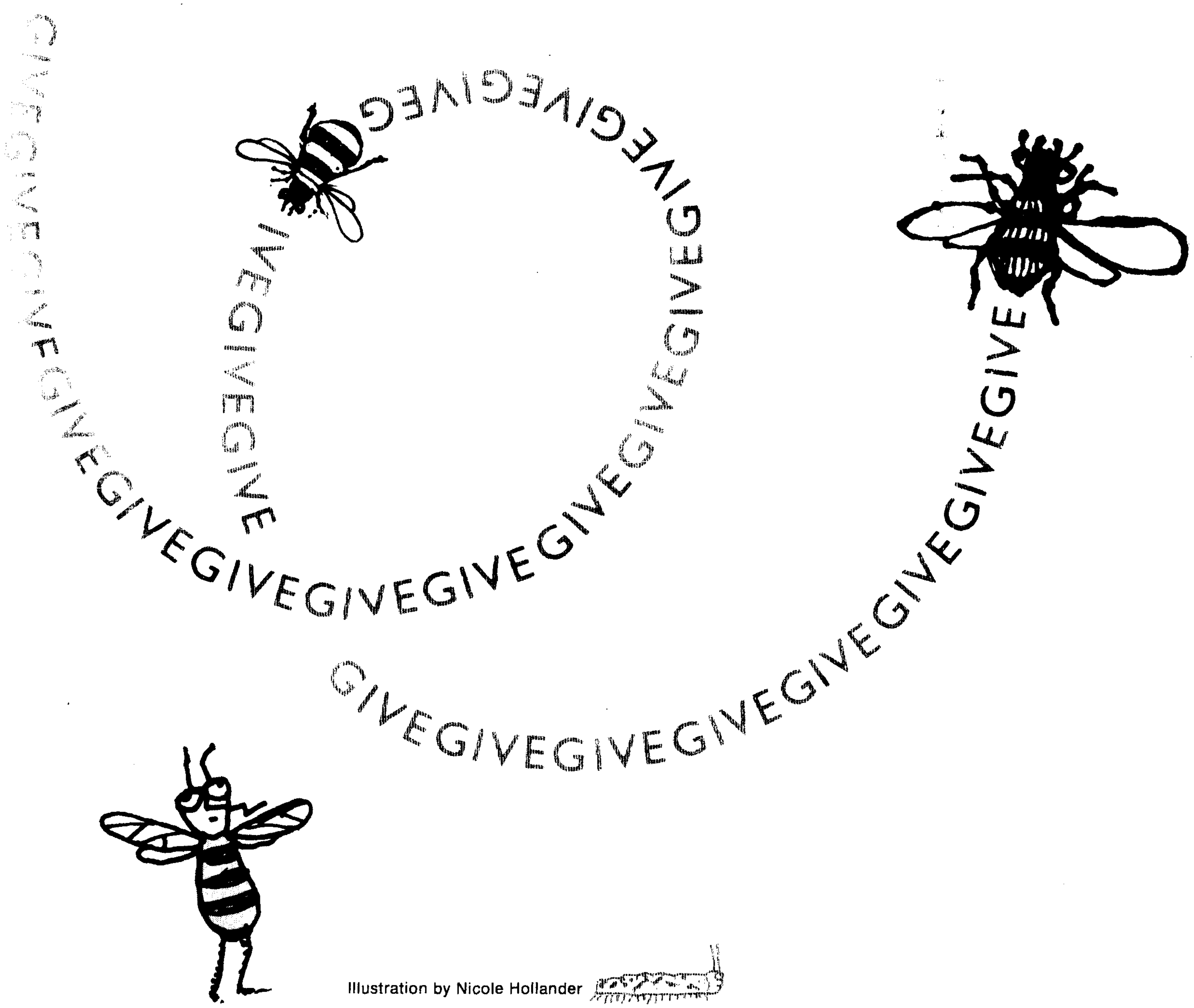


Illustration by Nicole Hollander

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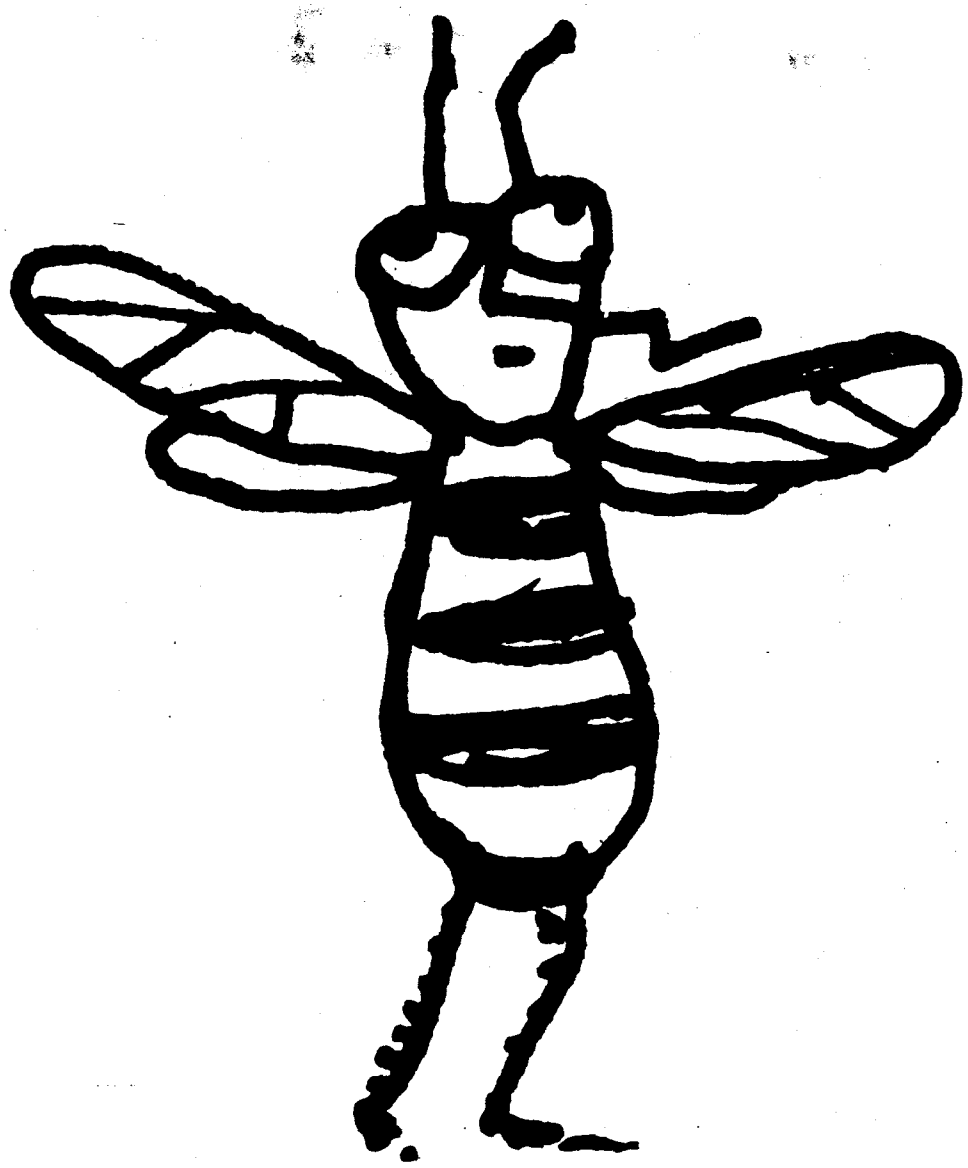
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age and not the substance. They grossly underestimated me."

Five years later, certain Pentagon procurement officials are known to refer to Rasor only as "that bitch," and they've stopped underestimating her abilities. Rasor's credibility among the people she uses, with the media and even within the Pentagon comes from the desire to be seen as neither ideological nor rhetorical. The project avoids any questions of strategy or philosophy, and deals only on the level of what the money is being spent for and whether the product works. They don't look at, for instance, whether the B1 bomber *should* penetrate Soviet air defenses, but whether it can.

The difficulty of being a woman investigator of military programs continues, however. "My friends inside the Pentagon call it 'my physical problem,'" blonde-haired, blue-eyed Rasor says a little bitterly. "It's a real double-edged sword—some people that I deal with can't accept a girl doing this, and won't deal with me directly. They'll leak to someone else who'll leak to me. I really go out on a limb for these guys and protect them, and they won't accept me as part of the group. In the beginning I really wanted to belong, but now it doesn't matter."

There *is* a group of defense experts in Washington who are concerned about the lack of female involvement and influence in the halls of the Pengaton and the columns of important newspapers. To redress this imbalance, two of Washington's more liberal defense groups have recently begun a series of morning briefings on defense issues for women. The purpose, according to Barbara Levin, director of the Women's Agenda for the Center for Defense Information and co-sponsor of the series, is to "encourage and highlight the role of women in determining national security issues."

Building an "old-girl" network: When Levin and the other co-sponsor, Anne Cahn, director of the Committee for National Security, began to research the invitation list for these briefings, they consulted a media directory and found only one woman assigned to the Pentagon and defense beat. In the field of foreign affairs and diplomacy, they fond about five out of 40 assignments.

"Women are just not part of the 'old boy' network in the defense and national security establishment," says Levin, "and they are not affecting policy. The media is an important and central place to start."

Levin and Cahn issue invitations for the briefings to women covering all different beats of Washington journalism. "There is a concern for those not covering the defense beat that they may be inhibited," Levin says. "The issues are technical and complex, particularly for those who are relatively new. We want to encourage women to get comfortable with the issues involved; then maybe they'll venture forth."

The goal is twofold: to encourage women journalists to delve into the rather intimidating complexity of defense and national security, and to give more exposure to women experts already working in the field. The briefers have all been women so far, both in and outside government, formidable experts in fields ranging from arms control to space weapons, military policy and U.S.-Soviet relations. "Women in the field are invisible," says Levin, "and they don't get the kind of recognition and exposure that men do."

Co-sponsor Anne Cahn concurs. "Who do you see talking about arms control issues in the newspapers and on television?" she asks. "It's always white males. The country is depriving itself of 50 percent of its brain power." And, presumably, making it less likely that a woman would be drawn to a field so apparently male-dominated.

Cahn is herself an arms control expert, having served in the Carter administration's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency as chief of the social impact staff, studying the economic consequences of defense spending abroad and at home. She has first-hand experience in the problems facing women in the defense field. "You run up against a lot of old attitudes, especially from older men who figure women don't really know the issues. They say, 'Now, now, Mrs. Cahn,' and are surprised when you want to talk about hardware."

One of the problems or barriers to women in the field, according to Cahn and others, is the fact that most of the defense establishment is made up of men who have served together in the armed forces. "They believe that they know the real threat," says Cahn, and assume that professional women in the defense field have a stereotypical opinion about national security issues.

Women without peers: *Do* women look at defense issues differently than men? Both Cahn and Levin deny that their defense briefings are motivated by any assumption about female attitudes toward national security. "I don't hold with the idea that women necessarily bring a different viewpoint to defense," insists Cahn. It is a question of numbers, she says, and there are just not enough women in the field to determine whether they would make a difference. "Now it's an isolated woman who makes it to the top in a man's world. She doesn't have any peer support for opinions that differ from those of the male bureaucracy."

Cahn says that she'd like to see an "old girl's network" develop within the defense establishment. Levin is more specific and hopeful about what that might accomplish.

"Some social scientists think that women solve problems differently than men, that they are more empathetic—more cooperative than confrontational," she says. "Perhaps women would put less emphasis on peace through strength, be less inclined to pursue military superiority. At this point the spending on military strength is 25 times that on global cooperation. If they are not compelled by peer pressure, women might bring a somewhat different perspective. It can't be proven, but it won't hurt to try. It won't make things any worse."

Meanwhile, no professional journalist, investigator, defense expert or lobbyist would admit to a bias based on sexuality. As in any male-dominated field, it is essential that a woman establish herself as an equal before she has the credibility to insist upon being different. As Dina Rasor put it, the "package" should have no bearing on the "substance."

Yet, in the waning days of the Reagan administration, sometimes style can make a difference where politics and ideology remain inflexible. Rozanne Ridgway is the current Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and is one of the highest-ranking women involved in the administration's arms control debate. At a State Department foreign policy seminar for journalists last year, Ridgway summed up what she saw as the three basic precepts of U.S.-Soviet relations: "We are two fundamentally different systems; these systems are bound to be in competition; it is a compettition that we want to win."

After decades of Cold War and billions of nuclear dollars, after decades of nuclear debate couched in weighty and intimidating terms of deterrence and flexible response, Ridgway's analysis made the issue suddenly terrifyingly simple. Her clarity reduced the debate to the level of a massive and ultimate sports event—a Harvard-Yale football rivalry on a global scale. By spurning the usual comforts of "defensespeak," Ridgway humanized the issue and brought it closer to the concerns and comprehensions of those it affects. As more and more women join the debate, an insistence on clarity and basic common sense will be the first step in the long process of bringing national security back to the people it makes secure. ■

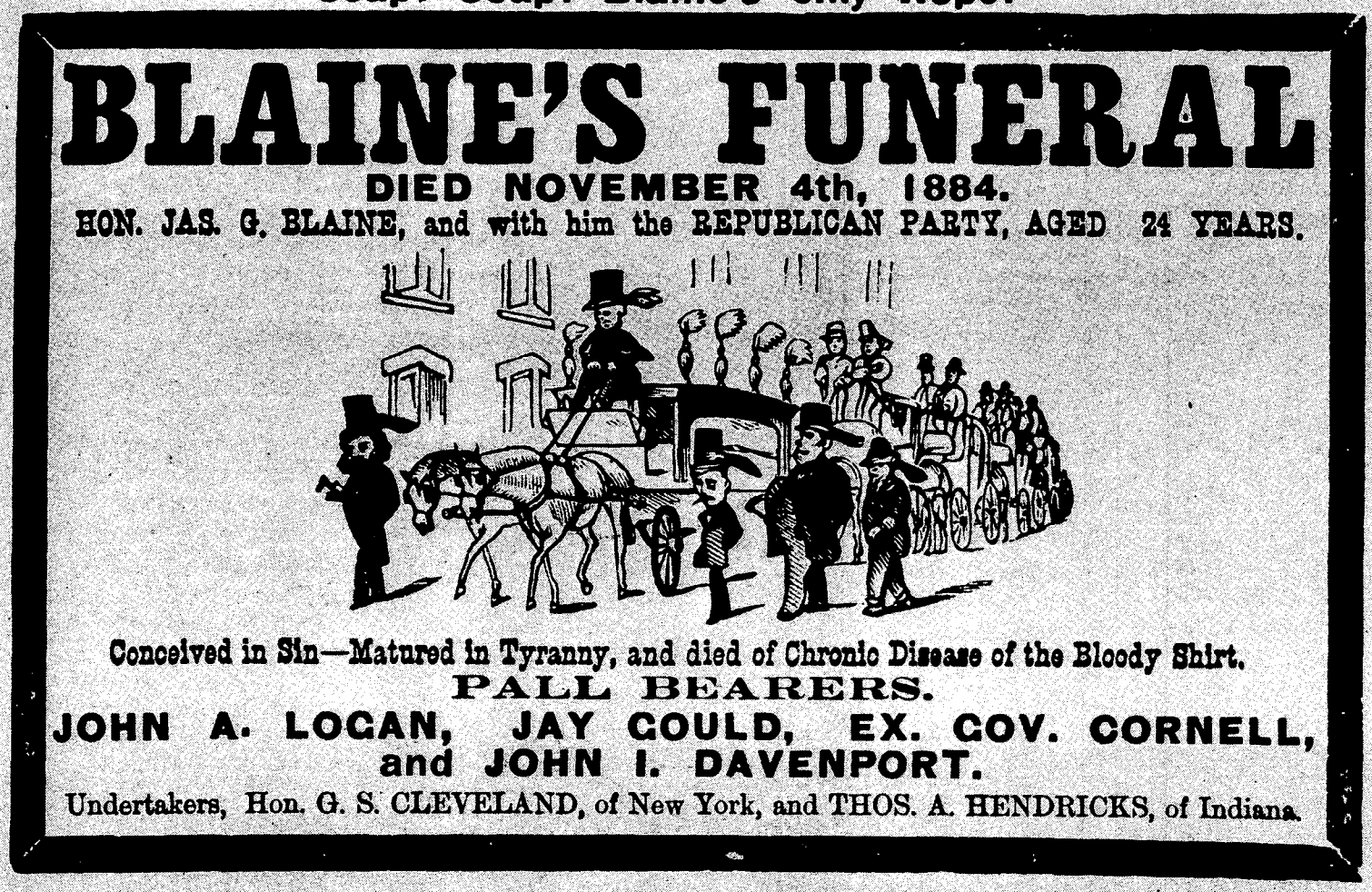
Alisa Joyce covers defense and foreign affairs in Washington, D.C.



e woman reporter exhausted two yellow legal pads and every defense expert in Washington with her questions.

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EDITORIAL



James G. Blaine's defeat and Gary Hart's ordeal

Just over a century ago—in 1884—our nation was engaged in a presidential contest that pitted public against private morality. The contestants were Maine Republican James G. Blaine, known as one of the "railroad congressmen"—a corrupt group of officeholders who served the interests of Robber Barons like Jay Cooke and Jay Gould—and Democrat Grover Cleveland, who ran as a reformer.

Blaine, though shaky in his public morals, was a model family man, Cleveland, though seemingly incorruptible in his public life, had an illegitimate daughter in Buffalo, N.Y.—where he had been mayor. His private indiscretions led the Republicans to campaign against him with the jingle, "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?/ Gone to the White House, Ha, Ha, Ha."

This, in turn, led Democrats to suggest that since Blaine's private morality was exemplary, despite his compromised public morality, and Cleveland's public morality was exemplary, despite his blemished private morality, Blaine should be returned to private life and Cleveland should be kept in public office. And so it was. Cleveland was elected president, the first Democrat to win that office since the Civil War.

Now, with a Republican president serving the interests of the truly greedy—and an administration that extols greed as having made our country great, while its own corruption is being laid out before the public—we also have a Democratic contender for the presidency under fire for his private morality. And we have media only too happy to pursue the private affairs of a candidate in a seeming effort to limit exposure of the corruption of the Reagan administration.

There are, of course, many ways to look at the predicament in which Gary Hart now finds himself. Given his invitation to the press to follow him around, he cannot be pitied too much for the result. But even so, it is a sad reflection on our media, and on the state of our political culture, that personal social or sexual relations are considered bigger news than the pursuit of policies against the law and the public interest—not to mention the betrayal of public trust and constitutional responsibilities of which the Reagan administration is guilty.

But it is equally disturbing that Hart, in defending himself, has not seen fit to insist that he should be judged on the basis of his policies, rather than on his private activities. He has not done that, in our opinion, because he does not differ substantially in his social priorities and political principles from his rivals—or because he believes that the only way he can win is to obscure his views on such matters.

We do not share this contempt for the intelligence and concern of the American people, implicit in the kind of campaigns being conducted so far by all the Democratic presidential contenders—Jesse Jackson excepted. Given the debacle of the administration—and of so many other recent administrations that, like Reagan's, tried to ignore the historic changes occurring in our own society and in the world—the need for fundamentally new domestic and international policies should be apparent to our political leaders. We believe that most Americans would welcome a campaign that took the larger issues seriously. It is probably the only kind of campaign that could get them genuinely interested in politics, rather than in titillating gossip. ■

Reagan's administration continues to unravel

Meanwhile, in the past week the Reagan administration continued to unravel. The CIA and the State Department have both been implicated in the contragate operation by Lewis Tambs, who resigned as ambassador to Costa Rica after it was revealed that he had given illegal aid to the contras operating in that country. It wasn't his idea, Tambs said. He was ordered to do it by a group appropriately known as RIG—the Restricted Interagency Group—which consisted of Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, Alan Fiers, head of the CIA's Central American Task Force and—you guessed it—Oliver North.

And Ret. Maj. Gen. Richard Secord testified before congressional hearings in Washington that he had discussed his activities with then-CIA Director William Casey, and had been told both by North and by then-national security adviser Adm. John Poindexter that President Reagan was "pleased with the work" he had been doing.

These revelations—at the very beginning of the contragate hearings—indicate that the continuing investigations may take on a life of their own. And that despite the evident desires of the media and members of Congress to contain the situation, the administration may be in more trouble than anyone in high places would like to admit. ■

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LETTERS

Ben Linder

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN, PARTICULARLY SINCE the shuttle explosion last year, about the sorry state of ethics in the engineering profession, where all too many people put the needs of their employer above the greater good of society.

Benjamin Linder is the other side of that story. While some members of his profession work in corporate industry, in universities under military contracts, to improve missile guidance systems, perfect space weaponry and perhaps even design hand grenades and other anti-personnel weapons that will do ever greater damage to their victims, Linder, a graduate of the University of Washington's Mechanical Engineering Department, studied hydraulics, the better to be able to go to Nicaragua and help build rural hydroelectric systems.

For his selfless efforts Linder, 27 was murdered two weeks ago apparently by a grenade. The grenade was tossed by a contra "warrior" following the latest CIA-designed strategy of going after civilian "economic targets" and those who support the Sandinista effort. It was bought with U.S. funds—perhaps money supplied by a craven Democratic Congress unwilling to take a moral stand against Reagan administration terrorism, perhaps money illegally raised earlier by Col. Oliver North and his gang in the White House basement.

Linder's death is tragic and his blood is on the hands of his own government, but it demonstrates a few important things. One is that his profession is hardly without ethics. According to TECNICA, a Berkeley-based organization that sends technical people to help reconstruction in Nicaragua, hundreds of American engineers in the past few years have risked their lives to go help the people of Nicaragua. TECNICA alone, only one of several organizations that sends such experts, has sent more than 180 engineers.

Further, if the administration and its contra thugs in Honduras thought that by killing Linder they would scare off such volunteers, they are in for a surprise. According to a spokeswoman at TECNICA, the organization got more calls than usual for information after news of his murder, and none of those scheduled to leave for Nicaragua with a team on May 1 cancelled their plans.

In addition to acting as a call to action by his technical colleagues, Linder's death may have done something else. The cold-blooded murder of ABC newsman Bill Stewart in Managua in 1979, by members of dictator Anastasio Somoza's National Guard, a crime that was videotaped by Stewart's horrified film crew and broadcast here, was a turning point in the Sandinista revolution. American revulsion at that murder ended any plans in Washington to try to save Somoza through military intervention.

In killing Linder, the contras, a reincarnation of the same National Guard, may have the same effect on Americans again, blocking apparent plans by the Reagan administration to mount an invasion. In death, Linder may have done more for the long-suffering people of Nicaragua than all the dams and electric generating equipment he could have built in a lifetime.

Dave Lindorff
New York

PLO

HILLEL SCHENKER'S ARTICLE ON THE ISRAELI view of the Pollard spy affair (*ITT*, April 22) was informative but lacked one important aspect. Hillel says, "If Jewish and non-Jewish Americans want to help Israel, they can support the forces in Israel working for a peaceful political resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." What about help for the Palestinians? They are the oppressed party in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why is it that we should be concerned for Nicaraguans under attack from the U.S., South Africans repressed by U.S.-supported racism and Israelis? Certainly many Israelis are not party to Israeli violation of Palestinians' human rights or the Israeli dispropriation of Palestinian lands. But let's put first things first.

Jewish and non-Jewish Americans can go much further. They can support the Palestinian forces working for a peaceful resolution of the conflict: the PLO. This is the organization that more than 90 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Israel support. This is the group that has regularly offered peace in exchange for a Palestinian state. This is the group that has been regularly castigated, belittled or ignored by most of the American political spectrum. Is it any wonder that Yassir Arafat is now reconciling with the radical left of the Palestinian movement? His diplomatic overtures, deemed untouchable by the American left, center and right, have left him looking foolish to the Palestinians. What other choice does he have?

Just as we speak about American support of oppression in Central America, Africa or anywhere else, we must discuss what our $3 billion annual aid to Israel does to the Palestinians. Schenker does not do this.

Dennis Schaffer
Seattle, Wash.

Ireland

AMERICANS—LEFTISTS ESPECIALLY—WHO WOULD take the trouble to study Irish politics —rather than going there with biases picked up from folk music album jackets—would find a lot of general relevance to this changing world. Your previous contributor on Ulster (a filmmaker) provided excellent insights. Laura Flanders' report (*ITT*, April 15), however, has almost everything confused (except what she cites from foreign press). The new Dublin government is in no sense a "coalition...dependent on a handful of independent" MPs. Haughey's is a Fianna Fail party government supported, in addition, by one right-wing, ultranationalist MP plus the critical abstention of one left-wing "freelancer." (Nobody wants the expense of another election for a year or more.) The new, third-place Progressive Democrats are not social dems; they are Thatcherite-Reaganite in their economics, but otherwise sophisticated liberal (Irish yuppies).

It is preposterous to say that the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement "rules out all consideration of reunification," the text guarantees that London will arrange just that once a free vote for it carries in Northern Ireland. Haughey originally opposed that pact, but not "on the campaign platform." Once the polls showed overwhelming support for the Agreement (in the South), he almost totally dropped comment on it during the campaign. The funny thing Flanders misses is that the concept is actually Haughey's—which FitzGerald originally opposed as counter-productive to democratic reconciliation in Ulster. The main thing Haughey has against it is that his rival "stole his clothes" and got credit for the idea.

But despite herself, she is right: Irish unification is not on. The London-Dublin civil servants are actually working, cautiously, for condominium over Ulster. But if they're not careful they'll get the civil war that American commentators erroneously assume has already been going on there. Autonomous provincial government (with guaranteed places for the Catholic minority) is another—if decreasing—possibility allowable within the Agreement's text. But if Dublin—and the British Labor Party—continue to undermine that option, Lebanese-like repartition (with de facto independence for the Protestant zones) is the most likely outcome.

Robert St-Cyr
Coordinator, North American Committee for Reconciliation in Ulster

Laura Flanders replies: *Robert St-Cyr's comments regarding the April 15 article are well taken. The support of Sean Treacy and abstention of Tony Gregory swung the Haughey vote, but the new prime minister's voting situation is far from being as secure as St-Cyr's remarks suggest. In his acceptance speech Haughey himself emphasized that the party may have "many difficult decisions which will have to be implemented with skill," and most of these will involve playing the far right of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats off against the "left bloc" of Labour, the Workers' Party and the Independents. Wooing Fine Gael for economic measures and the rest for social policy, the new leader will indeed have quite a "handful" with which to deal.*

On the subject of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, I would like to point out that this author is one and the same as the "filmmaker" whose comments St-Cyr previously found so insightful. It is "preposterous," perhaps, to suggest that British legislation on Ireland is less than it openly pretends, but the 1922 Act that originally divided Ireland also specifically guaranteed reunification "once a free vote" carried for it in the North. Sixty-six years and thousands of sectarian deaths later it hardly requires a filmmaker's eye to view such language with distrust. It is the final attack on the victims of the conflict to suggest that they are erroneously experiencing a civil war.

Roots

AMMIEL ALCALYAY'S ARTICLE ABOUT THE POSSIbility of Moroccan Jews in Israel serving as a bridge between the Arab and Jewish populations (*ITT*, April 29) is well and good if we are talking about intercultural understandings. But it does not get to the root of the problems of Palestinians.

Certainly Moroccan Jews owe a debt of gratitude to Mohamed V who granted asylum to Jewish refugees during World War II and who protected the Jewish population in Morocco from the Nazis when other leaders all over the world refused to do so. However, the image one gets of Morocco as a human rights haven is really rather far from the truth. The same King Hassan II who encourages meetings of Jewish groups in Morocco is waging a 12-year-long war to annex the Western Sahara (former Spanish Sahara); is repressing the Sahrawi population (except for an occasional Sahrawi who supports the annexation) in that region, denying them their language and customs; has jailed and tortured some 2,000 Sahrawis without trial or accusation; does not permit Sahrawi youths to leave the Western Sahara except to go to Morocco; has the majority of his armed forces in the Western Sahara along the six "sand" walls he has had constructed to attempt to physically separate the territory; and uses Israeli advisers on his defenses in Western Sahara.

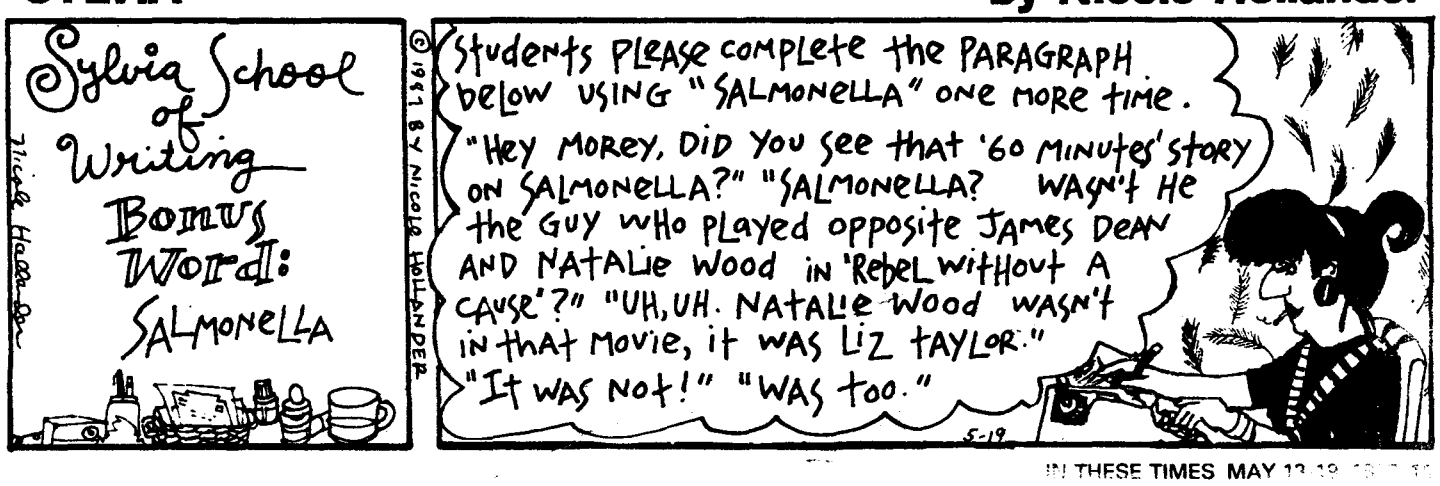
Could it be that King Hassan's contemporary overtures to Jews and to Israel are tied to his desire to annex the Western Sahara and to get support wherever he can for that annexation?

Anne Lippert
Ada, Ohio

Corrections

In the April 22 issue of *In These Times* the *Nuclear Resister* was misspelled. And in the "Contragate Scorecard" chart published May 6, the line connecting Richard Gadd to Luis Posada should actually have connected Gadd to William Cooper. We regret the errors.

SYLVIA **by Nicole Hollander**



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Chernobyl and nuclear power growth

By Alexander Amerisov

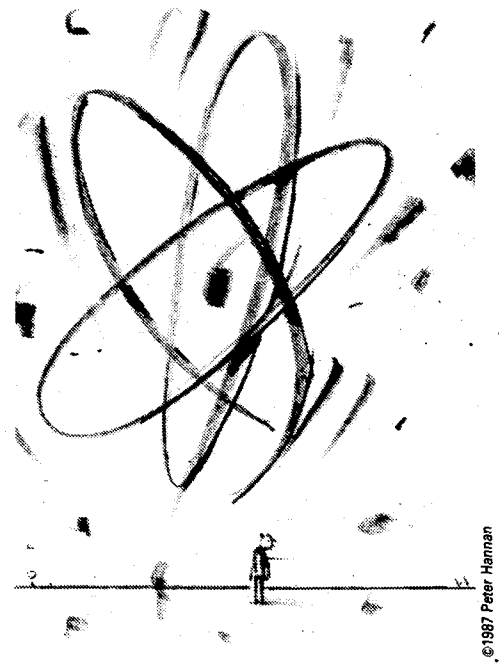
CHERNOBYL IS PROBABLY THE LARGEST industrial disaster in history. The nuclear reactor explosion that occurred in the early morning on April 26, 1986, released into the atmosphere 50 million times more radiation than the accident at Three Mile Island. Thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, will die before their time because of it. The economic losses to Soviet society alone are conservatively projected to exceed $10 billion. The Soviet government now calls Chernobyl "an expensive lesson." To me, a year after the tragedy, there are three more lessons that we can draw.

- What Premier Mikhail Gorbachov called "the sinister force" of nuclear power is the freest where the people's power is the most restricted.
- The international system of control and supervision of nuclear power is manifestly inadequate and lost all credibility after Chernobyl.
- Countries that continue the use of nuclear power open themselves up to justifiable interference from abroad by concerned citizens of other countries.

The arrogance of power: There were more than 2,000 minor accidents at nuclear power plants in the U.S. last year alone. At least three people were killed as a result. But how many such accidents took place in the Soviet Union? Besides Chernobyl, we don't know of any. Even in pluralistic democracies, the people's ability to monitor nuclear facilities is very limited. In one-party states, the public's ability to participate in supervision and control is virtually non-existent.

Unfazed by the human suffering and damage to the environment that continues from Chernobyl, the Soviet government proclaims that it will go right on building more nuclear power plants. In three years it intends to double Soviet nuclear capacity, in 13 years to increase it fivefold. Soviet authorities are proceeding with construction of three nuclear power stations that use Chernobyl's technology and design close to large population centers.

Other plants will be equipped with water-moderated, rather than graphite-moderated, reactors, according to Andronik Petrosyants, chairman of the State Committee for Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy. But he was at pains to emphasize at his April 25 Moscow press conference that the switch to "new" technology was not motivated by Chernobyl but by cost-cutting measures.



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In Sweden, a country with one of the better records on the use of nuclear power, popular measures forced the government to speed up plans for its complete phase-out. In other countries of Europe, the people have forced their governments to abandon plans to bring them "into the nuclear age." Even in France, where the nuclear industry is run by the military and is almost as secretive as it is in the Soviet Union, opinion is beginning to go against nuclear power, thanks to a free press and public protest.

In the U.S., no new power plants have been licensed since Three Mile Island, and an intense struggle is unfolding with the nuclear industry and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on one side and anti-nuclear activists, communities and some state governments on the other. People increasingly understand that no presently existing technology can assure them that another Chernobyl will not happen.

On May 9 in *Pravda*, the premier Soviet expert on North America, Georgy Arbatov, chided Western reporters for their aggressive coverage of Chernobyl. He wrote that it will backfire, intensifying the public outcry against nuclear power in the West. Arbatov, exposing his own ignorance of the issue, presumes that public outcry against nuclear power in the West is a threat and not a benefit of Chernobyl. He also demonstrates his complicit awareness of the differences between democratic countries and the Soviet Union. He knows that no public outcry on this issue is allowed in the Soviet Union. The several informal anti-nuclear groups that exist in the Soviet Union survive largely because of world public opinion, which Soviet authorities don't want to upset at the moment.

Hans Blix & Co.: Supervision of the nuclear industry by supposedly independent international organizations is not a substitute for democratic citizens' control. Chernobyl exposed the subservience of such international organizations to the nuclear industry and Soviet authorities.

Hans Blix, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, was called to Moscow in the aftermath of the tragedy to tell the world that everything was OK. After visiting the devastated area, Blix came back to Moscow on May 8 to say that the situation in Kiev was "normal."

But the same time Kiev's regional party boss was telling the Moscow-based daily *Sovetskaya Rossiya* that the situation there was "alarming" and that "it was too early to say that everything is back to normal."

Blix also should have known that what was normal for Kiev (which, despite its proximity to Chernobyl, was not the hardest-hit city) had been redefined. On May 12, the government daily *Izvestiya*, in passing, disclosed that instead of 0.5 rem per year (the standard for those living near factories where radioactive chemicals are produced), Kiev was now being measured by the standard of 10 rem per year applicable in a crisis situation. At the same time *Pravda* reported that the radiation level in Kiev was between .35 and .4 millirems per hour. At this rate, it would take Kiev residents five years to reach the new radiation standard, only two months under the old one. Kievans reading the passage in *Izvestiya* probably were surprised to find out that even before Chernobyl their exposure was measured by a special norm for those living close to "factories where radioactive chemicals are produced."

Even in pluralist societies the people's ability to monitor nuclear facilities is limited. In one-party states it's non-existent.

If Blix's participation in the Soviet cover-up is tragic, the agreement that Gorbachov gave him is a joke. The Soviet Union will install six radiation-measuring stations at its western borders, instead of around its power plants. This will allow the Soviet authorities to know first if radioactivity from another damaged reactor is about to reach Western countries. It will spare them the embarrassment of lying if they know they will be discovered.

The World Health Organization (WHO), a United Nations affiliate, did not behave much better. At an emergency meeting in Copenhagen on May 6, its experts' recommendations can only be described as obscene. They recommend to wash vegetables and refrain from using rainwater only in areas of particularly heavy rainfall. For other areas, except within the immediate vicinity of Chernobyl, WHO found no reason to restrict travel or ban food imports (Greece, England and Norway still forbid the sale of certain meats from contaminated regions). These experts also said that there was no need even to wash clothing, skin or vehicles, except within the immediate area of the disaster. People living outside the immediate area, as far as WHO was concerned, could keep on using ground and surface water without any problems.

"This reassuring advice," complained David A.V. Fischer, an occasional consultant to Blix's agency and its former assistance director for external relations, in the August/September 1986 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, "however, came too late to prevent some excessive precautions." By the time he wrote the article, Fischer should have known that Kiev residents were told for the first time to take precautionary measures only on May 7—a day after the World Health Organization's meeting.

What "excessive precautions" could Fischer mean, if it was not until May 10, four days after WHO's meeting in Copenhagen, that Evgenii Velikhov, the Soviet scientist in charge of the cleanup of Chernobyl, was able to say that "the possibility of catastrophe that was written about so much in the Western press can now be excluded. Indeed, until today, theoretically the possibility of catastrophe existed—a large quantity of fuel and reactor graphite was in a red-hot state. It is no longer so." On May 13, *Pravda* was still telling its readers that the battle "is far from over, it continues."

Across frontiers: The breach of public trust by the above-mentioned international organizations is not accidental. They are financed largely by governments with vested interests in expansion of the nuclear industry. The officials of these organizations are mostly government appointees and are rarely at risk themselves from misuse of nuclear power. At best their commitment to the safe operation of nuclear facilities is philosophical.

With international organizations incapable of proper supervision of civilian nuclear installations, it is left for concerned citizens and communities to assume a supervisory role. But even in democratic countries people lack financial and expert resources to fight nuclear industry. Through sharing of information, planning of joint action and other forms of mutual support the resources can be acquired. But what good will it do for Swedes to get rid of their nuclear plants if there are dozens more of them in the Soviet Union that continue to be operated under "cost-cutting measures"? Swedes and other Westerners can't simply go into the Soviet Union and supervise Soviet installations. But the Soviet people can...providing there is a real democracy in the Soviet Union. ■

Alexander Amerisov is editor of the *Soviet-American Review* and Soviet affairs commentator for National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*.

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ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

Contragate Contraprop

The calculation of the Reagan administration, even as the public hearings into the Iran-contra scandal get underway, has been that it will only take some very mild demonstrations of military prowess by the contras to get congressional support for military funding for fiscal year 1988, when the current $100 million expires. In the weeks before Benjamin Linder was murdered near San Juan de Bocay, contras were running shuttle tours for eager U.S. journalists around the Honduran-Nicaraguan border, designed to show that they now constitute a disciplined fighting machine, imbued with the principles of Thomas Jefferson and the compassion of Mother Teresa.

There seems to be no limit to the credulity of U.S. reporters when taken on these jaunts. The *New York Times*' James LeMoyne, a man experienced in the region, filed glowing dispatches on the renewed martial ardor of the contras, betraying no suspicion that the entire patrol was probably arranged for his benefit, since a favorable mention in the *New York Times* is far more important to contra survival than blowing up women and children or throwing hand grenades at U.S. peace volunteers.

Three weeks ago the *Washington Post*'s William Brannigin sent an ecstatic account of his protracted trip with a band of contras in which he admitted that after a week plowing through the jungle the band had met no one. The only significant detail that Brannigin could come up with was an intercepted radio communication, supposedly from a Nicaraguan military unit, saying that it had been "roughed up" by some contras. It does not seem to have occurred to him, any more than to LeMoyne, that even this could have been laid on for him.

A cynical account of such PR trips was supplied to an Israeli journalist by an arms dealer he encountered in San Jose, Costa Rica. In *Ma'ariv* for March 20, Eli Teicher described a conversation with a former IDF officer, "Yehuyda," in which, as the two sat drinking in the Grand Hotel, the following exchange occurred:

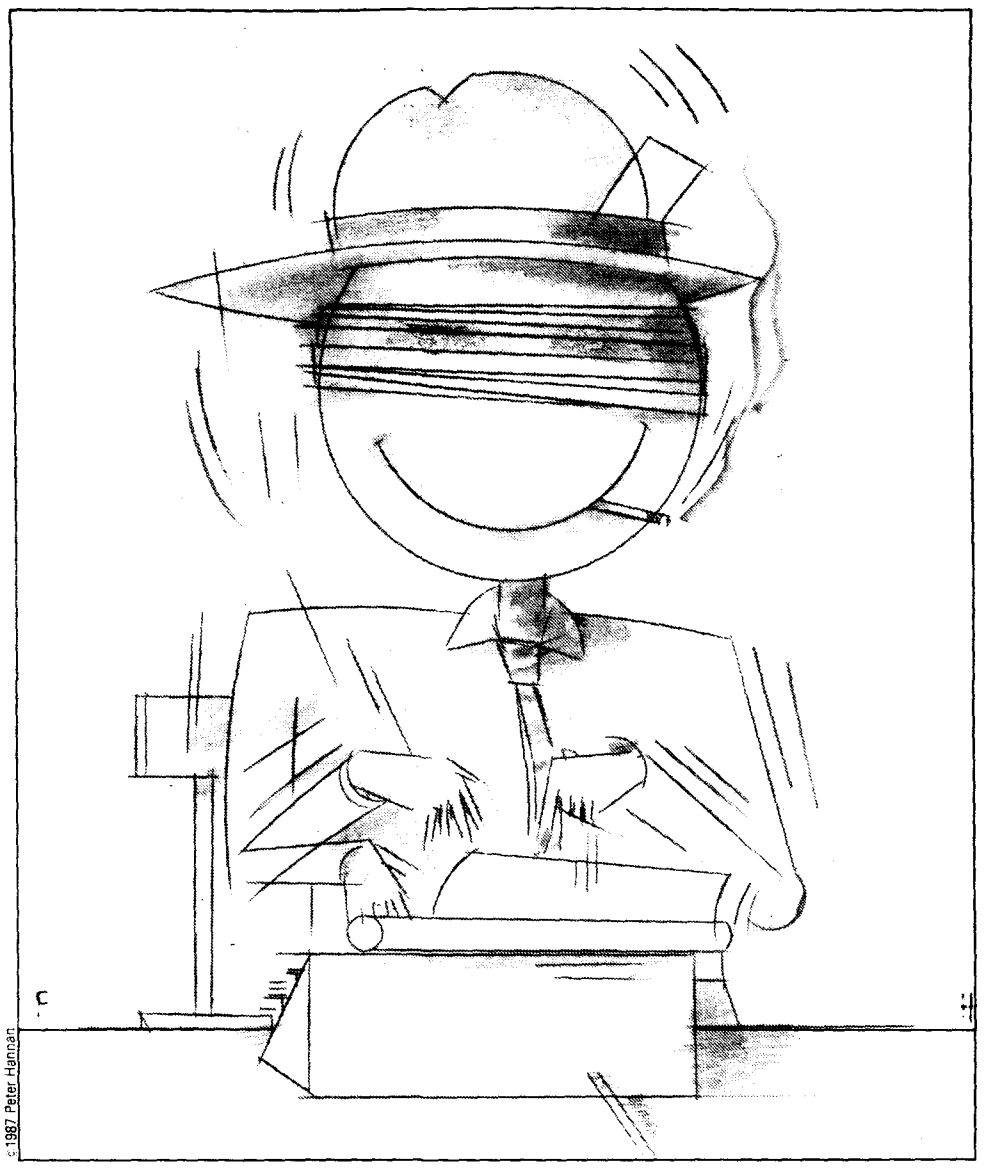
"What about the TV films showing contra war activities?"

"Most of it was fabricated. How would journalists know where Honduras ends and Nicaragua begins? What do you think, that there is an organized border with windows for immigration, customs offices and duty-free shops? This is a fucking jungle and that's a fucking jungle. So they take them some place near the border and fabricate a firing incident."

"And they don't sense the fraud?"

"At first, I also didn't understand how they could be such idiots. How come they never understand why they always have such perfect filming angles, why the lighting is perfect and, always, some successful incident, like a brave penetration across the border. I finally got it: the television crews come down here to get a tan, to drink rum, to screw some local girls and mainly to punch in extra hours. They have absolutely no interest in accidentally stepping on a land mine and losing a leg or running into a nervous snake. So they make life easy for themselves and film only what is produced for them. And so everybody is satisfied, including the grant givers in Washington. Tell me, do you know Haym Yavin?"

"Yes."



"Tell him to send a TV crew down here. I can arrange a deluxe battle, complete with casualties."

"Where will you get the casualties?"

"What do you mean? Haven't you been to Basic Training. About a hundred contras will lie down, close their eyes and play dead until after the filming."

"And wounded?"

"I've had a lot of experience with that. I pour chicken blood on some contras. The chickens are later returned to their owners. Here chickens are more important than anything."

"And the generals of the contras really do nothing?"

"They sit in the jungle with a finger deep up their ass and think how to squeeze more dollars from the idiot gringos in Washington, just like the generals of South Vietnam did back then."

Yehuyda may have been exaggerating about the chicken blood, but not necessarily so.

Pope poops out

The pope's unexpectedly strong performance in Chile was widely covered, with TV cameras showing powerful images of popular upsurge and state repression. Less attention was paid to the pontiff's performance in Argentina in his visit there between April 6 and April 12. Only once in his 26 speeches and homilies did John Paul II allude to past human rights abuses in Argentina, saying, "May there be no more kidnappings or missing people." The fact is that the Catholic Church's hierarchy during the "dirty war," when more than 10,000 Argentinians were murdered by army death squads, has much to be ashamed of.

The pope's speeches were drafted by the same conservative hierarchs. On April 5, *El Pais* ran a long article on the "complicity" of the Argentinian church, crammed with such details as the fact that the military chaplain, Father Marcial Castro, had, in his book *Armed Forces, Ethics and Repression*, given theological justification for torture as being, in exceptional cases, for the common good. *El Pais* also pointed out that Pio Laghi, the Vatican's present apostolic nuncio to the U.S., had been the apostolic nuncio to Argentina during the dirty war, had been shown copious documentation of the horrors then in process and had nonetheless persisted in giving his blessing to the armed forces.

After the pope had left, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize winner, said that the Argentinian bishops had organized "a beautiful tourist trip" for the pope. The U.S. press has developed a certain deafness where Esquivel is concerned. Esquivel, who organized a peace ship for Nicaragua in concert with U.S. Nobel Prize winner George Wald, said in mid-March that the Sandinistas' process in Nicaragua is "irreversible," and that the Costa Rican "Arias Plan" for Central America is an attempt to "block" Contadora. Esquivel also said that he is even more concerned for Honduras than Nicaragua, because the Honduran people are "totally defenseless" in the presence of the contras and the U.S. bases in Honduras. He added that a two-week trip through Central America had shown him "the intervention, the repression and the grave violation of human rights which the United States is committing."

This kind of forthrightness is in marked contrast to the performance of the present holder of the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel, who finally managed to resign from the board of Prodemca—the lobbying group urging support for the contras—on March 10 of this year and who has yet to say anything publicly that might seriously inconvenience the Reagan administration.

Dirty Business

While the contra bands get on with their normal activities of murdering civilians and snowballing journalists, there are a number of sabotage teams, amounting to some 100 men in 10 separate units, inside Nicaragua and supplied with maps and plans of targets. The hoped-for destruction of an oil-storage tank or kindred facility is intended to provoke excited commentary in the U.S. media and in Congress that at least the contras are showing their mettle, and should not be left in the lurch. These teams were supposedly inspired by retired Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, head of the World Anti-Communist League and sometime consultant to the Pentagon on low-intensity conflict, and by former CIA director William Casey.

The fact is that if the Iran-contra scandal postponed a straightforward U.S. invasion (and even now Adm. Gene LaRocque of the Center for Defense Information thinks the upcoming U.S. military maneuvers in Honduras involving 50,000 men could be an anticipatory cover for just such intervention), the Reagan high command is as zealous as ever to overthrow the Sandinistas. After the resignation of Adm. John Poindexter, direction of the National Security Council was taken over by Frank Carlucci. The media rang with praises for this "professional" who would bring order to the NSC. Carlucci, aside from his sponsorship of Richard Secord, has been a career proconsul of the American Empire since the days of Lumumba's assassination in the Congo, where Carlucci was stationed at the time.

The Tower Commission reported that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the way the NSC was being run, and Carlucci underlined this spirit of continuity by recruiting José Sorzano as his main NSC adviser on Central America. Sorzano is as hard-line as Oliver North ever was and has been at the United Nations, where he was an aide to Jeane Kirkpatrick. Over at the CIA, now controlling the contra operation, the specific overseer of such activities is a former assistant to Casey named Alan Fiers. Those who think that life will be brighter the day Eliott Abrams is forced to resign should be aware that the latter has been under attack by Fiers from the right, according to former CIA analyst David MacMichael. So if the high-profile and vulnerable Abrams were to go, contra subversion would be run with just as much vehemence.

In other words, it would be foolish to imagine that because "wild men" like North have been deactivated there are not other wild men zealously pressing forward with the Reagan agenda for Nicaragua. It was, no doubt, the CIA overseers who suggested to the contras that U.S. peace workers in Nicaragua could now be considered targets—a decision that may be reconsidered in the light of public reaction to the murder of Benjamin Linder. Both CBS and ABC filed relatively strong reports of the circumstances of his death, even though ABC cut short the angry cry of Linder's father that the contras killed his son, and that "Reagan says he is a contra." ABC omitted the portion about Reagan. ■

Alexander Cockburn writes a column in *The Nation*.

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Nasty habits thrive when money is a controlled substance

By Lawrence Swaim

IN VIEW OF THE ALMOST INSATIABLE urge Americans have developed for being manipulated by the executive branch of government—and for grovelling generally—there is justifiable alarm at the campaign for drug testing, which is aimed, in part, at promoting blind obedience. On the other hand, with cigarette smoking and alcoholism leading the list, addictions are an important national crisis. And addictions function in American society in a special way. Linked to long-standing economic pressures within U.S. society, addictions often provide apt metaphors for the underlying realities of American capitalism.

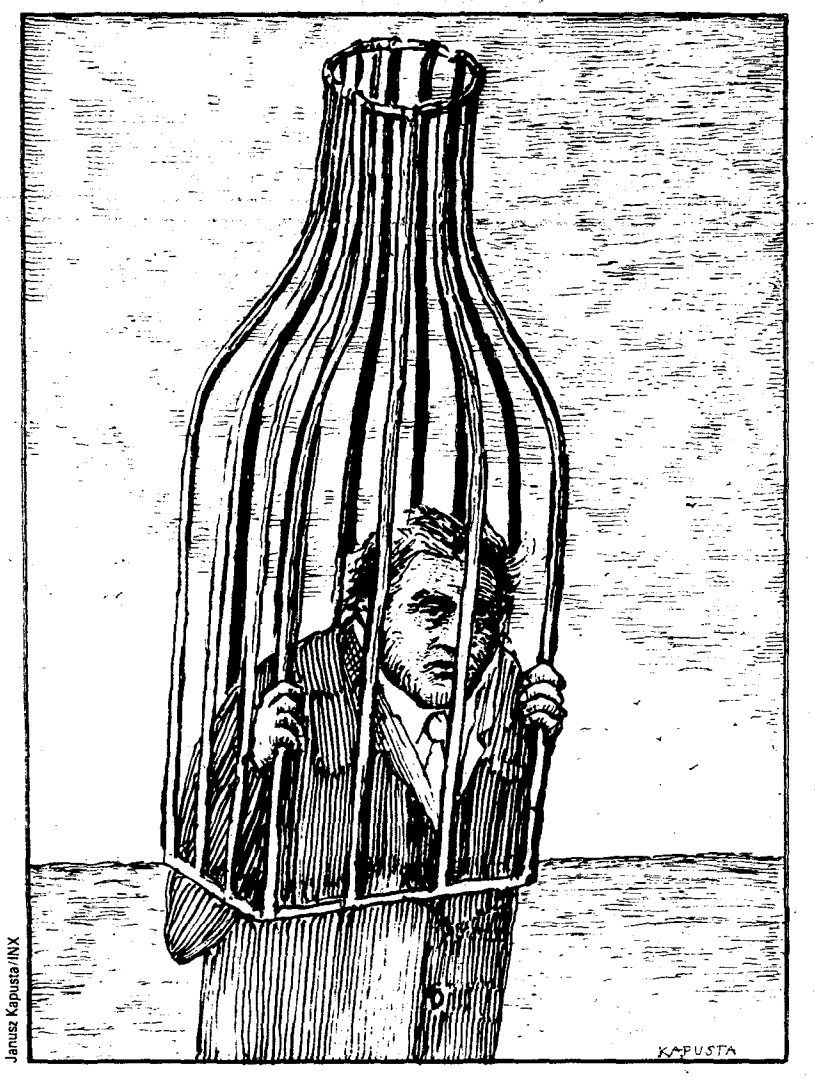
Nineteenth-century commentators often wrote about drunkenness among the immigrant groups and along the frontier. This may have partly reflected the prudishness of the writers, as well as the basic rawness of American life at that time, from which distilled liquors provided relief for some. But it perhaps also speaks to the temperaments of the immigrants and settlers, many of whom may have wanted more from America than she could really give.

America functioned as a kind of dreamland for Europeans, a place of imaginary wonders, and later the West played the same role for Easterners. It was only natural that those who left their homes to go to the New World—or the Wild West—carried with them hopes that reality could never match. Like today's pilgrims who seek perfection in California, they were bound not just for glory, but for some intense and bitter disappointments. Risk-takers who dream impossible dreams are primed for alcoholism.

Which inspired the 19th-century temperance movement that arose among reform-minded women alarmed by alcoholism in the working class. Temperance advocates saw that those harmed most by alcoholism were women, who were victimized by wife-beating, child-abuse and abandonment. Brave and outspoken women, the temperance leaders were also frequently passionate suffragists, and some were union organizers and socialists. But there was little agreement about the causes of alcoholism among workers, though it was almost surely enhanced by brutal working conditions. (This unwillingness to discuss links between addictions and working conditions is still observed in many—if not all—company rehabilitation programs.) The temperance solution—prohibition—proved unworkable, but temperance leaders did succeed in making Americans aware that something was wrong in the company towns.

The addiction market: But what *was* wrong? Like the addicts in today's company-sponsored recovery programs, people at the turn of the century were expected to keep quiet about the pain caused by bad working conditions, and by exploitation generally. The market would decide economic affairs, making ethical debate about industry unnecessary, and even slightly un-American. A kind of popular materialism based on the worship of the market as the highest good was already displacing Christianity as the true religion of the nation. Capitalism did not need to be discussed because it was perfect. If there were small problems here and there, they would be automatically corrected by the unseen hand of the marketplace.

The problem, then and now, is that this doesn't feel right. Americans try hard to believe that the marketplace will take care of everything, and yet it doesn't. Some of us sense the powerful economic forces afoot, but we are discouraged from talking about them. America's failure to produce a durable left makes it difficult to discuss our own worst obsessions. We are haunted by ghosts we cannot name—and this produces powerful feelings of frustration, alienation and rage, the common root of which is a sense of powerlessness and fear. I believe this is a major component of our national proclivity for addictions.



Janusz Kapusta/INX

To be sure, most writers on addictions tend to concentrate on how substances affect the mind and emotions of the addict, rather than the environment that produces them. Both the 19th-century Thomas de Quincey and the very 20th-century William Burroughs see them as obsessions around which all the sensibilities of the individual eventually come to be organized, which in turn makes addiction a controlling metaphor for all human need. The addict is in a constant Faustian relationship with the world, trying to outdistance and outsmart pain (or Death), but finding in the end that he must face all the pain he had previously evaded.

The Faustian bargain: But this Faustian bargain is built into the very marrow of the American experience. If the market is the highest good, it follows that long-range usefulness and social needs are constantly being traded off for short-term profit. Furthermore, we are constantly being told by our economic mandarins that this is fine, because it all serves some higher purpose. Perhaps we suspect that this is a lie, but we strain to believe it anyway, because arguments for selfishness are intrinsically seductive. This promotes a tendency to go for short-term gains and pleasures, and to say to hell with the future. Since we know there is something wrong with this, we do it defensively, but for just this reason we also do it compulsively.

Drugs such as alcohol can be used for strictly social or aesthetic reasons—an appreciation of fine wines, for example, could be considered a minor art form—and as such can add greatly to the enjoyment of life. But used by an addict, any substance can become a device through which he tries to impose short-term control over unpleasant feelings aroused by the environment. The irony, of course, is that addicts lose control of the substance itself in the long run.

The relativity between control and addiction can be inferred from an amazing story told me by a former social worker in New York. This woman had clients who reported regularly to a methadone clinic. Workers at this clinic reported that when furniture in their offices was rearranged, the methadone-consuming clients would invariably complain that the methadone had been weakened. They felt a momentary loss of control, and this was reflected in a sensation that the methadone was no longer effective. For the addicted person, the substance does not just control the emotions; on a deeper level, the level of the subconscious mind, it is felt to actually control the world itself.

ADDICTIONS

In a country without a real political alternative, this may be the only kind of control some desperate people can believe in.

This may be the case especially within the black underclass. There is a growing sense of panic among black activists who sense—correctly, I believe—that if America accepts the drug epidemic among black youth they are also accepting the institutionalization of the underclass. Some conservatives hope to use this panic to recruit blacks to Reagan's anti-drug crusade, and doubtless the anti-drug rhetoric will be used by those blacks who have recently come out as Republicans.

At the same time, most blacks will not be fooled by this, as they know all too well the extent of the Reagan administration's hostility to drug treatment centers in the black community. And they know that such drugs as crack concern the government only when they threaten white middle-class children. Whatever is done in the black neighborhoods about drug addiction will most likely have to be done by blacks themselves. At the same time, they must promote sensitivity among white progressives to the special political meaning of addictions in black American culture.

Cold turkey: Reagan's propagandists emphasize clean living, family values and the fearless use of American power to defeat those out to destroy the American way of life. The swelling number of recovering addicts—and those still struggling to deny their addictions, especially alcoholics and cigarette smokers—could find undertones of Reagan's message very attractive. He offers them a vision of a "safe" world, in which their anxiety about staying clean from substance abuse can be subtly intertwined with fears about staying clean from ideological contamination. The current mood of fear about addictions, and where addictions can lead us, could be part of the psychological—that is to say, subconscious—underpinnings of a new right ideology. Neither liberals nor the left have anything really important to say about addictions except to project their traditional objections to government interference, and that does not address the fears of most people.

Which is too bad, because one of the reasons addictions are so fearful and so fascinating is that the addiction process almost exactly mirrors certain functions of American capitalism. Since World War II, the American economy has been almost completely dependent on arms spending. Military Keynesianism, the underlying principle of the American economy, is nonproductive. You can't go to a store and buy a nuclear weapons system, and it can't be used in any socially beneficial way. So its stimulative effects are strictly short-term. Furthermore, you have to constantly increase the amount of military spending to make the economy function in an even minimally normal way. American capitalism, then, is not just a contributor to the collapse of values that underlies our proneness to addictions. American capitalism itself functions exactly like a bad addiction.

And we sense, on many levels, the constant Faustian trade-off between the short-term and the long-term. This is not to say that America is not a fascinating and seductive place (the dreamlife of its movies, its electronic folk music beloved of youth everywhere, its talent for inspired nonsense). But beneath this pulsing excitement, the promise of glamour in a personal garden of delights, there is always the feeling that somewhere out there, there is a price to be paid. Someday there will no longer be enough military dollars to pump into the American economy to keep it from collapsing, no more money to pay back the quick-fix loans. And then it comes—death, insanity, or cold turkey, the long sobering-up process. ▣

Lawrence Swaim is a frequent contributor to In These Times.

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By Pat Aufderheide

The Disinformation Age

Liars' chic is the latest trend in TV advertising: "Joe Isuzu," with his cheerful whoppers instantly refuted by subtitles, as well as Max Headroom, have shown there's money to be made from consumer skepticism. As has become usual in the Disinformation Age, the road to liars' chic in ads was paved by politicians—particularly that Telegenic Liar Ronald Reagan. Now, not content with merely imitating the politicos, the ad world is actually employing them. Promoting a new "lite" ice cream is none other than Watergater John Erlichman, touted as "an unbelievable spokesperson for an unbelievable product." Other unbelievables include Melvin Dummar, who laid claim to part of the Howard Hughes inheritance, and a psychic with a history of wildly inaccurate predictions. It's apparently been easy to convince the celebrity liars to star in the spots, showing once again that the road to credibility these days is paved with publicity.

Ted Koppel's home run

The Federal Communications Commission is now reviewing its policy of granting preferences to women and minorities in granting station licenses, having raised the specter of unconstitutionality. (The policy, it suggests, may not result in diversity.) Federal officials who wonder what difference control at the top makes might have tuned in to *Nightline* April 6, when Al Campanis, former vice president of the Los Angeles Dodgers, delivered his now notorious remarks disparaging blacks. Less widely reported was Ted Koppel's reply to Campanis' query as to how many black TV executives there were. Koppel said, "If you want me to tell you why there aren't any black executives, I'm not going to tell you it's because the blacks aren't intelligent enough. I'm going to tell you that it's that whites have been running the establishment of broadcasting, just as they've been running the establishment of baseball for too long, and seem reluctant to give up power. I mean, that's what it finally boils down to, isn't it?"

Executives on Parade

Has the merger-and-takeover frenzy in broadcasting affected news and public affairs programming at the TV networks—which Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) calls "the primary information provider to the American people"? That was the subject of a three-day, three-ring-circus of a congressional hearing. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued that fast trades and huge debt loads, in what Markey calls the "casino economy" of broadcasting today, made a joke of the notion that stations are community service enterprises. Ex-broadcast executive Fred Friendly perhaps put it most pithily: "We have reached a point where commercial TV makes so much money doing its worst it cannot afford to do its best." He censured Congress for sitting back while the FCC dismantled basic broadcast regulation, and called for requiring stations to air an hour of news nightly and an hour of public service programming weekly. Network news chiefs reluctantly presented themselves to a Congress that they suggested was dangerously close to infringing on First Amendment rights by dabbling in content questions. Each echoed the comments of CBS President Laurence Tisch at a seminar in New York the same week. To a question on the effect of Wall Street on CBS News, the man who had slashed both news budgets and jobs in the division crisply responded, "Absolutely none." When, next day, network presidents testified in a similar vein, they also listened to legislators argue with each other over the propriety of congressional inquiry into programming.

The hearings exposed the ugly legacy of the Fowler FCC, which by destroying longstanding structural regulation (such as the rule requiring owners to hold stations for three years) has raised the specter of government interference in content not only at stations but at networks. The original decision by Congress to create a limited number of full-power broadcast stations (rather than, say, a lot of low-power stations or to make broadcasting a common carrier like telephones) inevitably saddled government with the job of patrolling the broadcaster's monopoly control over a powerful mass information service. The delicately laced regulatory net was designed to give the private sector maximum control over programming, while ensuring broadcasters' public responsibility, public access and community involvement. Network executives' fears are not idle ones. But the information industry's heavy support for deregulation is a major reason why they ended up in the congressional hot-seat. Content regulation is unlikely, but legislation to check fast trades and mergers could result.

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Snafu: Situation normal, all fouled up

The Situation
Written and directed by
Don Gomez

By Pat Aufderheide

FOR NEARLY A DECADE, FILMS from the left have been levelled at public complacency about El Salvador and become a stape of grassroots education for political action. The recent debut of *Heartstrings: Peter, Paul & Mary in Central America* is the latest evidence that the work (like the need) goes on. Other recent offerings include *Dateline: El Salvador*, documenting recent mass mobilizing, and *Sanctuary: A Question of Conscience*. By contrast, after a pre-Reagan flurry of filmmaking, the right has effectively left image-making to politicians.

Two recent films on the subject come neither from left or right but from dead-center of the American pop media consciousness. Together they make up a story about the stories we tell ourselves.

Salvador is the one we've seen, or tried to. It's the film Oliver Stone made before he hit gold with *Platoon*. After opening to positive, if baffled, reviews for its combination of cause and schlock, *Salvador* bowed out modestly at the box office. Now you can find it easily on video.

Like *Platoon*, *Salvador* is an action-packed drama told in the language of mainstream male entertainment. And like the Vietnam film, *Salvador* features a patriotic protagonist betrayed in his search for heroic status by corrupt political realities.

The film is based on a real-life character, Richard Boyle (played for smarm by James Woods). He's a down-at-the heels freelance photojournalist who with a hapless buddy (James Belushi) heads to El Salvador for the action. His combination of alienation and allegiance to "the main chance" adds up to a guarantee of his "objectivity." Unlike the Miss Priss network reporter, and unlike the cynical embassy and military officers, he can't afford not to see what's there.

What he sees is a synopsis of headlines from El Salvador—the right-wing death squads' body dump; the prancing-on-graves of right-winger Roberto D'Aubuisson; the murder of American religious workers; the assassination of Archbishop Romero and the massacre during his funeral.

Documentaries gave Stone the real-life footage from which scenes are cribbed with meticulous visual fidelity. This time, though, it's through the story of someone who doesn't want to see beyond the scene, and who can't help it. His rage when he yells at U.S. military officers for complicating his simple patriotism is real, familiar and echoes a far wider sentiment in the American public. He was just there to "get the story," not to be part of it.

The Situation, a 90-minute documentary, covers the same ground. But this time it's all real. Written and directed by Don Gomez, it's the

EL SALVADOR

record of two years a group of freelance American journalists spent in a small war-wracked Salvadoran town trying to "get the story" and, willy-nilly, becoming part of it. The group included Richard Boyle, (yes, the same one who was the model for *Salvador*'s protagonist), and the film crew was composed of seasoned war correspondents, two of them (Ken Gomes and John Buff) Vietnam veterans. The photographer, Milt Graham, had served as a personal photographer for Ronald Reagan. The film is a peculiar amalgam of personal testimonial and network-styled reporting. Throughout, it's embarrassingly frank and touchingly naive; finally, it's deeply troubling.

The Situation is not as much about El Salvador as it is about what Americans don't know and what happens to them when they find out. It's appropriate that it's told in the stolid language of a network documentary, and also appropriate that the story keeps bursting through the form. As they confront the camera with their memories (aided by line drawings), these tough journalists end up looking like little boys betrayed.

The Situation is not as much about El Salvador as it is about what Americans don't know and what happens to them when they find out.

Town without pity: First we're introduced to the town, through a markeplace where people exchange small heaps of vegetables for small heaps of coins. (The typically maudlin narration recalls "those simpler times before the war ravaged their beautiful green valley.") Then we're introduced to the journalists' surprise at the villagers' humanity. As the family draws the journalists into its Latin warmth and inevitably into its tragedies, the journalists are drawn into a drama they had intended to capture for *export*.

The journalists share their horror at confrontation with realities not shown on prime-time. Out-of-control soldiers fire M-16s in a small cafe. A couple of angry, drunken American soldiers nearly kill one of the journalists, himself an ex-Green Beret. The crew gets on a hit-list and is nearly liquidated.

They also share their horror at confrontation with unrealities. Their journey with guerrillas exposes them to the myth of the "ever-present" but never-seen Cuban forces, which U.S. officials and major media keep insisting *are* there. Finally, they explain, they decided there must be at least one—a "Magic Cuban" who could be everywhere. And they found out how the Magic Cuban is created when some of their material was confiscated and twisted out of context in a government documentary touting the Cuban threat.

Ultimately the story returns to the boys themselves. The strain of discovery and the pain of participation prove too much for Milt Graham, who, upon the death of a member of the Salvadoran family that had "adopted" them, attempts suicide. Another journalist is ordered to leave the country; finally the others pack up, determined to carry their revelations home.

The Situation's clumsiness actually works for it. The editing appears to have been done with a hatchet by someone with slow reflexes, leaving speakers hanging on screen after they've finished and also expressing visually their sense of shattered categories for their experience. The rough camerawork gives the film a home-movie look. And that tone makes the stories—which fly in the face of "what every schoolboy knows" about El Salvador and the American role in its war—the more believable.

The Situation could easily have been cut by one-third to good effect, but even so, it's devastating documentation. Yes, it provides a counter-record of the dirty war that the U.S. government is "advising" in El Salvador. But it also documents the quandary a "just-the-facts" journalist faces when confronted with facts that just don't fit into the invisible categories that contain "objectivity." ■

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For further information on *The Situation*, contact Video Video, 1376 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062, (408) 425-0624; for *Heartstrings* contact First Run Features, 144 Bleecker St., NY, NY 10012, (212) 243-0600; for *Dateline: El Salvador* contact Media Action Group, Box 291575, Los Angeles, CA 90020, (213) 461-7305; for *Sanctuary*, Cinema Guild, 1697 Broadway, NY, NY 10019, (212) 246-5522.

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Fraying strands of diplomacy

Confronting Revolution: Security through Diplomacy in Central America
Edited by Morris J. Blachman, William M. LeoGrande and Kenneth E. Sharpe
Pantheon Books, 438 pp., $12.95

By Steve Ellner

NICARAGUA

CRITICS OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY may judge the Reagan administration's performance in Central America on the basis of one of two criteria. On the one hand, they may question the morality of propping up regimes that encourage, if not actively promote, the use of terror and turn a deaf ear to the needs of the people. On the other, they may attempt to expose the negative consequences of U.S. policy which, by creating socio-economic problems and exacerbating tensions in the region, undermine U.S. interests.

The first approach frequently condemns right-wing doctrine for placing the ends before the means in the name of a holy crusade against international communism. The second is often pragmatic: it ascribes ignorance to the administration rather than evil intent, while scoring it for unwittingly betraying our best interests. Rather than dwell on human suffering per se, this approach tends to delve into the complex implications of U.S. policy on socio-economic, cultural and diplomatic fronts.

While by no means evading moral issues, *Confronting Revolution* is written in the second mode. The anthology consists of 14 essays by academic experts (including Cole Blasier and Peter H. Smith, president and ex-president of the Latin American Studies Association), which cover the broad ramifications of the conflict in Central America. The works are surprisingly consistent in their focuses and viewpoints. Thus individual essays on the five isthmus countries, the regional economy, the Contadora Group and Cuban and Soviet involvement in Central America all tell the same story: the Reagan administration's big-stick diplomacy in Central America has opened up a Pandora's box whose evils are as diverse as they are unmanageable—and they will plague the region and the U.S. for many years to come.

Policy and premises: *Confronting Revolution* poses the question to the reader: accepting the basic premises of U.S. foreign policy (particularly the need to limit Soviet military presence in the hemisphere), just how intelligently formulated and run is that policy?

In the case of the Carter administration the reviews are mixed. On the one hand, Carter's approach earns praise for being "sophisticated" in that it recognized the limits imposed on U.S. power by the recent developments. While the U.S. is more powerful in "absolute terms" than ever before—as measured by our technological, military and economic capacities—the U.S. government's ability to shape events is greatly constrained by the assertiveness of new actors on the scene such as members of the emerging middle class (the "counter-elite") and the Contadora Group.

On the other hand, Carter's effort to prop up and domesticate reformers, in a polarized situation where right and left are squared off and everything in between has fallen out, is considered ingenuous: "the naivete of Carter's policy lies in its belief that it could conjure up a moderate reformist political center to act as the vanguard of evolutionary change—that this center could by itself overcome the intransigence of the right and recapture the political initiative from the radical left."

The authors, however, can be accused of such naive thinking as well for prescribing in the concluding two chapters (both written by Douglas C. Bennett and the volume's three editors) that U.S. policy should seek to promote broad alliances in Central American nations that would encompass the left. It is hard to imagine the U.S. going out of its way to support leftists anywhere in the world—much less in a conflict-ridden region such as Central America. Nor can the imagination easily envision the formation of the type of alliance on which the authors bank their hopes for Central America.

Verbal terrorism: The financial assistance that Carter offered the Sandinistas was sufficient to induce them to moderate the country's pace of reforms and refrain from undergoing a full-fledged military buildup. In contrast, Reagan's policy (which the Mexicans call "verbal terrorism") has created the opposite of its intended effect.

Only after 1981 did the Nicaraguan government begin to purchase heavy weapons, such as Soviet tanks, and to build up its militia. In the same manner, Havana's response to Secretary of State Haig's not-too-veiled threats of armed action against Cuba was to strengthen its military deterrent on the order of a 200 percent increase in the acquisition of Soviet armaments.

Elsewhere the story is much the same as a result of the administration's obsession with rhetoric and its lack of concern for or ignorance of the nitty-gritty problems of individual countries in the region. In the essay on Honduras, Philip L. Shepherd appropriately describes the tacit arrangement between that nation and the U.S. as a "Faustian bargain" whereby "Honduran geopolitical, military and economic obedience to the United States...[is] exchanged for American economic largesse and military 'protection.'" In the process the nation has been transformed into an "international welfare case," at least partly because "the Reagan politico-military strategy has, in effect, torpedoed its economic strategy."

Another "unintended consequence" of administration policy is the staying power of the Contadora Group, whose initiatives surprised foreign policy experts. These pundits assumed that the foreign debt and other pressing problems afflicting the organization's four members (Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and Panama) would obviate their playing an active, independent role in the region. In an essay written by Terry Karl, the Contadora Group becomes a formidable challenge to the Pentagon-promoted "doctrine of National Security," which is predicated on the need to combat aggression emanating from outside the hemisphere.

The Contadora surprise: The premise behind the Contadora Group, on the other hand, is that peace in Central America is essential to the interests of each member nation, since the alternative is a "potentially uncontrolled and uncontrollable regional war." Karl's assertion that the Contadora Group has played a dynamic and useful role contrasts with the administration's tendency to belittle the organization's importance—as exemplified by Reagan's statement made last year that the organization is virtually defunct.

The authors concur in their assessment of the extent of Cuban and Soviet interest and involvement in Central America. They play down the role of both nations and even use evidence from State Department White Papers that purport to show just the opposite, namely that the socialist bloc has intervened on a large scale. Their reading of the importance that the Soviets attached to the overthrow of Somoza in 1979 recalls Moscow's response to the Cuban revolution 20 years earlier.

Soviet writers originally depicted the Sandinista movement as well as Sandino himself as "adventurist," just as they had Fidel Castro prior to his taking power. After 1979, Soviet historians rectified their position on Sandino (whom they now eulogistically call a "revolutionary democrat"), but Moscow remains reluctant to overextend itself in Central America. The Soviets have refrained from providing Nicaragua much in the way of hard currency (either through loans or imports), nor have they furnished the type of sophisticated military equipment that has gone to other allies outside of the Warsaw Pact.

Studies on the left: What the Cuban revolution did for Latin American studies in the early 1960s, the Vietnam War did for Asian studies toward the end of the decade. The Central American conflict has also generated its share of concern, as demonstrated by the spate of recent publications on the topic. The interest has been translated into greater demand for Latin American courses on campuses, while enrollment in Asian, African and Mideast studies has fallen off. Needless to say, the trend delights Latin Americanists (this one included). It remains to be seen, however, whether enhanced understanding will have an impact, albeit belatedly, on U.S. policy. Implicit in the message of *Confronting Revolution* is that regardless of the ideology of those who formulate foreign policy, a deepening of their knowledge will influence the decisions they reach—most likely for the better. ■

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The Sandinista Revolution: National Liberation and Social Transformation in Central America
By Carlos M. Vilas
Monthly Review Press, 317 pp., $12.00, paper

By Karl Bermann


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The Sandinistas continue to have their problems—particularly on the economic front.

NICARAGUA

Sandinistas patch together a revolutionary collage

THE CONSTANT U.S. HOSTILITY toward Nicaragua's revolution has created such a charged atmosphere both in this country and internationally that cool-headed examination of the subject has become difficult at best. Consequently, most of the literature on Nicaragua since the Sandinista-led insurrection toppled the 43-year Somoza family dictatorship in 1979 has either been ammunition in the propaganda war, or has been deeply colored by it. Such might be expected when the stakes are survival—for most Nicaraguans, survival in the blood-and-guts sense; for Washington, survival of the remaining dominoes on its global gameboard.

Largely obscured by the smoke have been the dynamics of a social experiment taking place not in the sterile laboratory of theoretical/doctrinal purity, but in the "field"—a field contaminated with rich complexity. Fortunately, Monthly Review Press has now made available in English Carlos M. Vilas' *The Sandinista Revolution*. Vilas, an Argentinian, has lived and worked in Nicaragua since 1980. Notwithstanding his sympathy for the Sandinista goals, or even his participation, as an employee first of the Ministry of Planning and later of a semi-official research center, he has succeeded in producing an objective and deep-going study of the real Nicaraguan revolution. In doing so he has sidestepped polemics, choosing instead the methods and tools of the social scientist while avoiding academicism.

As defined by Vilas, the Sandinista revolution at this stage is popular, agrarian and national, not proletarian or socialist. The revolutionary measures adopted to date have been more anti-oligarchic than anti-capitalist. The traditional subordination of Central America to the U.S.—which in Nicaragua's case has been more political and military than economic in a direct sense—dictates that the ongoing struggle for Nicaraguan national sovereignty be an essential component of the Sandinista struggle for social emancipation.

The revolution confronts a dual contradiction: that between the nation and imperialism and—what Vilas defines as the fundamental contradiction—that between the domestic exploited and exploiting classes. But the author differentiates this duality from a schematic "revolution in stages," which demands that the masses postpone their aspirations in the interests of "national unity" until some distant future. Here unity in "popular camp" doesn't halt the class struggle around the fundamental contradiction, but it does subordinate its development to the struggle against imperialism, economic backwardness and counterrevolution.

Popular camp, unpopular fronts: Nor is Vilas' "popular camp" the vague, classless concept of "the people" that characterized the discredited and often disastrous "popular fronts" promoted by left-wing parties in the past, in which the exploited were subordinated to the political leadership of a group of "nationalist" capitalists. On the contrary, the strictly limited perspectives of the latter make imperative the "popular classes'" hegemony.

For Vilas the category "people" is specific. Statistics on combatants who took part in the final insurrection against Somoza show that the largest group were students (29 percent), followed by "tradespeople" (22 percent), which includes artisans, mechanics, craftspeople, individual producers and self-employed persons of various sorts. The data show, moreover, that a majority of these students came from families in the "trades," greatly increasing the weight of that group in overthrowing the dictatorship.

Even though this is precisely the group we'd expect to encounter on the streets of Paris in 1789, Vilas attributes their preponderance not to holdovers from precapitalist forms, but to the specific features of dependent agro-export capitalism in Nicaragua. The breakdown of traditional relations in the countryside through the expansion of agro-export crops generated a migration to the cities without creating a parallel urban industrialization that could absorb the population shift. Significantly, Vilas notes that while urban industrial wage-earners comprised only 16 percent of the insurrectionists, this was more than double their weight in the population. It is in the countryside that a classic process of "proletarianization" took place, and both rural and urban workers have a specific role to play within the revolution's hegemonic "popular classes."

Cornucopia of contradictions: Here is a revolution filled with contradictions. Today the same urban poor who manned the barricades against the dictatorship, "with the same enthusiasm...participate in price rises 'come what may' and join with ardor in practices of speculation, frequent contraband, and foreign exchange trafficking. For them there does not seem to be a particularly concrete contradiction between ideological adhesion to the revolution, including participation in some of its tasks, and tax evasion, overcharging and hoarding of basic goods." The government itself has taken a lax—perhaps overly lax—attitude thus far, preferring to let the neighborhood Sandinista Defense Committees, AMNLAE (the women's group) and other mass organizations try to curb such activity through education.

Nicaragua is now undergoing a difficult transition to development, not a transition to socialism. For the Sandinistas that—and not simply the need to appease Western governments or forge national unity against U.S.-sponsored attacks—determines the need for a mixed economy, and consequently, a conciliatory attitude toward the private sector.

While Vilas sees no alternative to this approach, he makes clear that it is fraught with problems. Big business hasn't responded to Sandinista incentives. Instead, large capital has moved out of productive investments to commerce and speculation. Tax and export incentives have fueled inflation. And there has been a progressive drift of bourgeois figures from internal opposition to counterrevolution. (Which is perhaps to be expected in revolutionary Nicaragua, "a vessel on which the bourgeoisie has embarked but can never steer.") This is a bourgeoisie, moreover, that "at the end of the 20th century must still be shown that universal, secular and free education is not a communist stunt," which may explain why that class feels more comfortable with the Reagan administration than the Sandinistas.

Sandinista policies have given short shrift to wage-earners, who have suffered a steep decline in real wages under the impact of the economic crisis brought on by the U.S.-sponsored contra war and economic blockade.

Conciliation seems to have met some success with small private producers, especially in the countryside. Indeed, with the agrarian reform small-scale producers have been the most dynamic sector of the economy. And the policy has enabled the revolution to maintain some support among the urban middle class.

While Vilas sees the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) as an essential vanguard, it is not an "authoritarian" vanguard. On the contrary, the FSLN has promoted independent organizations of urban and rural workers, farmers and women, not as transmission belts for official policy, as is often suggested by hostile U.S. critics, but as guarantees of popular control in the revolutionary process.

Mixed economy, mixed reviews: Vilas describes this as a "dynamic dialectic relationship" complete with its own contradictensions for the mixed economy project. The state intervenes to limit these mobilizations, but only after instituting fundamental aspects of their demands. And the unions, especially the agricultural workers, have been leading critics of bureaucratism on the part of state functionaries.

The dialectical give-and-take remains problematic. Government incentives and concessions have enabled the entrepreneurial sector to prosper, relatively speaking. And the peasants have successfully defended their interests through aggressive organization. But government policies have given short shrift to wage-earners, who have suffered a steep decline in real wages under the impact of the economic crisis brought on by the U.S.-sponsored contra war and economic blockade. The decline in wage-earners' standard of living has caused a wholesale exodus of workers from productive industries into petty trading, speculation and the like, which has further damaged the fragile economy.

Vilas completed his book before Nicaragua's 1984 election, and therefore does not analyze the relation between the emerging popular democracy and the elements of formal democracy inaugurated by that election. Nor, of course, does he measure the impact of steps the Sandinistas subsequently adopted to control some of the economic problems he describes. But Vilas wouldn't claim to have written the last word on Sandinista Nicaragua.

The final word on the jumble of contradictions that is the Nicaraguan revolution will not be written for some time. And as the fate of that revolution is contested in Nicaragua's workshops, farms, schools and markets, as well as on its battlefields, Vilas' *The Sandinista Revolution* will be an indispensable guide. ■

Karl Bermann, author of *Under the Big Stick*, is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

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Brazil

Continued from page 9

threat of a debtor's cartel, the banks' worst nightmare.

The position of the banks will be further strengthened by support from the Reagan administration. One unidentified U.S. official was quoted in the local press as saying, "It's clear that we don't like this situation. If the idea catches, they can bring down the system. Do you think we can allow that to happen?"

The Brazilian government, however, is unlikely to completely cave in to the bankers' demands. From a political standpoint, a full-fledged economic austerity program—preferably under the auspices of the IMF, the banks' principal demand—is all but impossible. This would create a huge popular outcry and could lead to direct elections later this year. While Sarney is clearly prepared to slow the economy (he has already announced plans to cut spending by state companies and to end some agricultural subsidies, two important bank demands), there is little likelihood of an all-out recession.

Brazil's sheer economic might (it is the eighth largest economy in the West) and the large presence of multinationals here also makes severe bank retaliation unlikely. There is no doubt that a refusal to renew short-term credits would create an immediate and steep recession. Yet this would result in huge losses for the banks and create tremendous problems for some of the world's largest multinationals.

"They can't do to us what they did to Chile," says Maria Elena Moreira Alvez, a university professor and trade-union adviser. "Brazil will go down the drain, but they'll come with us."

Alvez believes that the government must obtain some concessions from the banks because an agreement to return to the pre-moratorium position—payment in full—is unacceptable to a large segment of the population.

The government's susceptibility to popular pressure is possibly the one great difference between the current civilian government and the old military regime. Although the government can hardly be labelled progressive, there is currently greater public accountability.

In 1982 the military government declared a temporary debt moratorium and then promptly accepted IMF demands for austerity. This led to the worst recession in Brazilian history. Civilian rule has at least resulted in greater government resistance to imposing these types of policies on the country. □

Ken Silverstein is a New York-based journalist who recently returned from a 10-month trip to Brazil.

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Appropriation

Continued from page 24

break for their siblings who can't draw. Which is fine. Certain types that once were denied the right to be artists by man and nature can now summer in the Hamptons, apparently by virtue of calling their patrons exhausted, paralyzed and sick. According to Larson "An appropriator *subsumes* an earlier work in an act of aesthetic cannibalism that is meant to signify stasis and desperation." Artists are seldom more than the mood rings of their culture; and many born around mid-century imagine themselves to be the inheritors of a world that has screwed up, a world exhausted of energy and courage, a world compromised and finally dominated by its innovations.

Their diagnosis may be partly true, but it also seems so preciously Oedipal. Maybe the appropriators are also playing another role, one more constructive than they are willing or able to recognize. We *do* live at a time that feels some sense of creative fatigue, and our cultural edifices may indeed be threatened by what the postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard calls a "crisis in foundations." After a chaotic century of change there's a need now for assessment. Appropriation may be our response.

Plato said the most noble job was the librarian's: the wisdom broker who provides access to our collected knowledge. In one sense the appropriator plays a similar role. Our need for new information today approaches zero, while our need to order what we already know has never been greater. Appropriation is not another creative upheaval: it's a break in the action, a chance to take inventory, an art of the pause.

We have all met the quiet librarian, however, whose altruistic exterior belies a deeper aggression. These contrary natures also exist within the appropriator, as photo "artist" Sherrie Levine (our second Levine) demonstrates in her "After Walker Evans" series. Levine is one of several appropriators featured in a touring exhibit organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts called "Photographs Beget Photographs." Levine's method, according to catalog commentator Christian Peterson, is to present "a number of Evans' well-known Farm Security Administration (FSA) images, which she has had mechanically copied by a commercial studio from book reproductions of his work."

Theft is property: Peterson argues well that Levine is not trafficking in "salable forgeries" but is instead pointing to "the nature, power and ubiquity of photographic reproduction." He mentions Walter Benjamin, whose essay on "the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" is the highly original rationale upon which much of this highly unoriginal work is justified. Forgery or not, Levine's work has brought her notoriety—an asset these days that is readily converted into cash. Those more resentful might put her on Plato's ladder of vocations somewhere between an Elvis imitator and the class cheat.

Money's role in this trend cannot be ignored. Appropriation in the arts is to some degree a model for the entire economy. We find the same factors at work here: the aggressive takeovers, the trade in illusory "services" rather than actual goods, the existence of a wild marketplace that thrives seemingly independent of the products we often no longer make. Assets, like images, are not created today: they are rearranged.

But if some profound stimulus for this trend exists outside mere art, it is the advent of genetic engineering. This scientific revolution will alter our worldview more radically than those personified by Einstein or Freud. Gene-splicing allows us to cut and paste life itself, to become in effect the editors of nature. Suddenly we see that life forms are plastic, an insight we can use to visualize what until now has been an abstract theory: the evolutionary process. A computer today can generate the myriad shapes, the various "reconfigurations" that can be drawn from a finite (if huge) set of points. Tomorrow the same may well be done from the finite if huge genetic code that scientists are currently "mapping" one gene at a time.

And what awaits us when this less-humble act of librarianship is finished? God knows—or perhaps he doesn't. As in today's art, tomorrow's science will be based on what Peterson in his catalog calls a "radical, postmodernist rejection of the concepts of authenticity and authorship." The creation debate will be rendered moot. Who created life will cease to matter in a world where the divine copyright on it means nothing.

To reconfigure life itself takes great audacity. Once again we confront the Faustian choice of pursuing knowledge or leaving well enough alone. The decision has already been made, of course, and its impact on our future can be seen in the more playful but no less relevant model provided by today's art. Appropriation suggests the dilemmas we will confront in the social arena when others will possess the ability to co-opt or reconfigure the very elements that make me...*me*. ■

Jeremiah Creedon is a freelance writer living in Minneapolis.

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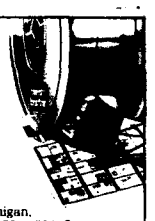
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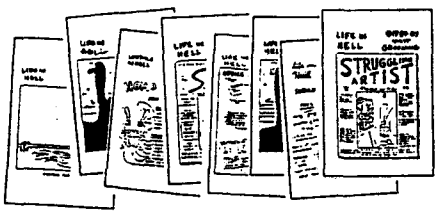
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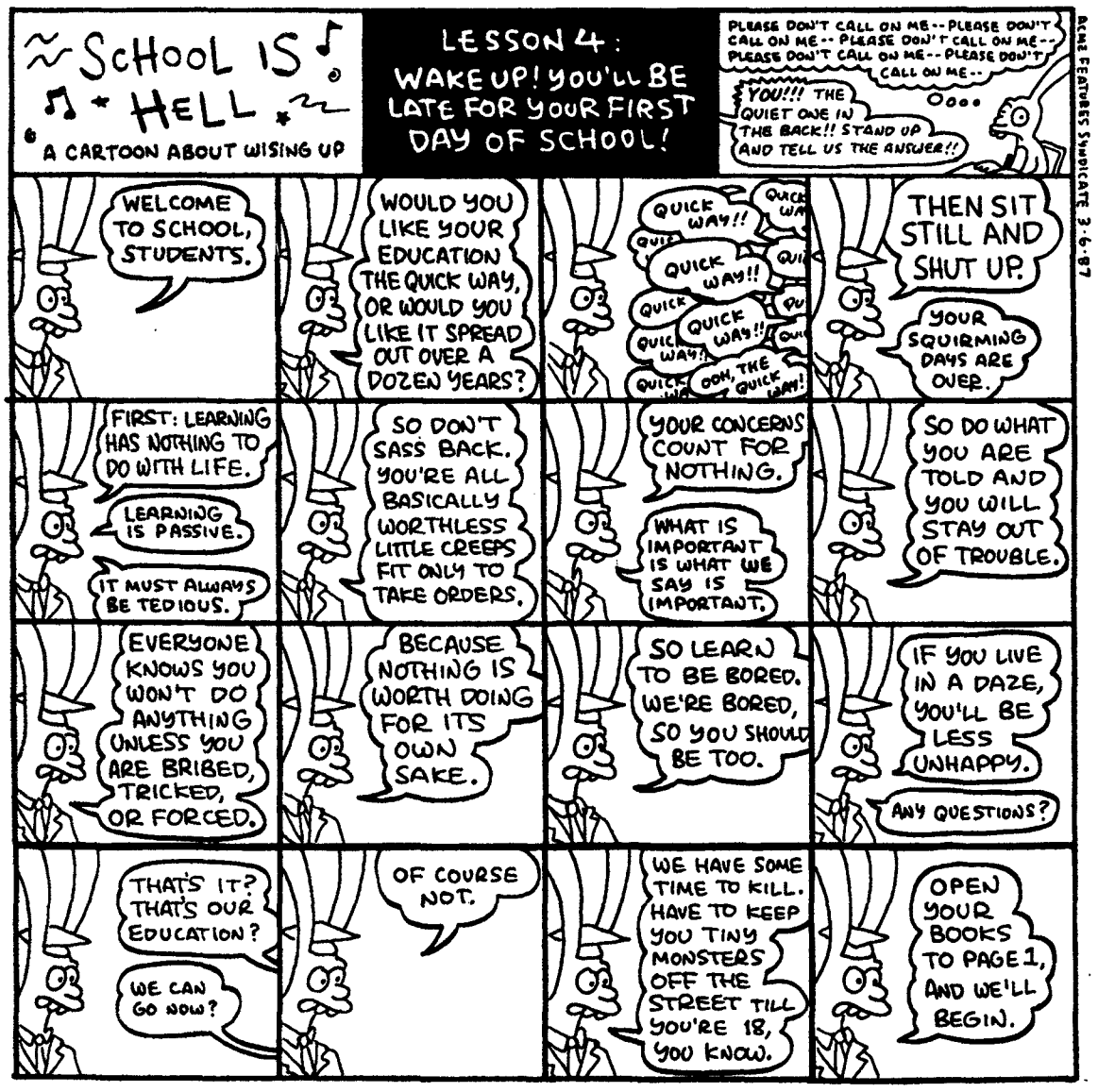
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Marxist Literary Group presents 1987 Institute on Culture and Society at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. Topic: "Right Hegemony/Left Possibilities." Participants include: Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Stanley Aronowitz. For information, write to Paul Smith, Dept. of English, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, (412) 268-2850.

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STOLEN MOMENTS



Recombinant culture and the art of appropriation

Da Vinci De Coster

By Jeremiah Creedon

LOOK ANYWHERE THESE DAYS AND YOU'LL find an example of what the art crowd is calling "appropriation." The term signifies a trend among artists toward borrowing (or stealing) images from earlier art works, often from the "icons" of their various disciplines. Once limited to painters and photographers, this postmodern tic is spreading beyond them, mutating as it goes into a contagious metaphor. Now pop writers and critics are using the term, perhaps because the concept behind it seems so familiar to us. Journalists, those mockingbirds of real thought, were appropriators long before the New Kleptomania made plagiarism sexy.

Judith Levine among others gives lip service to the idea in a recent piece for the *Village Voice*. In a review of *Caught Looking* ("one of the first feminist stroke books"), Levine writes that to own these pornographic images is "never innocent." The act is "an appropriation—subversive." Her essay amplifies the book's premise that porn is OK if the women in it are having fun; and her avant-garde wrapper (be subversive!) may embolden those who would never dare to buy just dirty pictures.

But Levine is right: these images no longer mean the same thing. By co-opting them the pro-porn feminists are also shifting the grounds on which this issue can be debated. Their revisionism may suggest a new tolerance in society at large, a view of porn as prophylactic at a time when celluloid could prove as useful in this regard as latex. Or it may not. Whatever happens, no protection will exist in the interim for the images themselves. The social forces that seek to exploit their power will invade them as a virus invades a healthy cell, transforming them into mechanisms for the usurper's aggrandizement. On any plane—metaphorical, political, aesthetic—this is how the appropriator operates.

Sound theft: Technology is bringing appropriation to popular music as well. One example is what can be called recombinant rock. The obvious reference is to recombinant DNA, or gene-splicing, which scientists are using to build new life forms. The musical parallel involves computer sampling machines, which today can generate entire tonalities from a single "found sound." A few notes and a drumbeat lifted from an old recording, augmented maybe by the plucking of a comb, provide the operator with a full synthetic palette. Music, suddenly freed from the art of performance, becomes instead a product of assembly.

Which is fine. We now have the potential to rearrange our favorite rock stars, living and dead, into any number of new combos—or to replace them with blazing riffs cloned from the creak of two door hinges. Manhattan art-rock percussionist David Van Tieghem plays with the technique in his recent recording of the old Iron Butterfly hit, "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." No camp pastiche is intended here, no wink is given to suggest that we enjoy this piece as an artifact. The irony is all conceptual. Recombining this rock icon is like Marcel Duchamp pencilling a mustache on the Mona Lisa: it gives Van Tieghem's innocent experiment an intriguing resonance.

We know, however, that what innocently intrigues us today will inevitably horrify us tomorrow. Musical samplers raise several legal issues, a crucial one being the threat they pose to actual musicians. Some advanced samplers can mimic and reconfigure a person's voice, thus generating statements that were never really uttered—which makes these machines a perfect gift for the latter-day inquisitor who has everything except a confession. How our beleaguered theories of ownership will be amended to face this challenge remains to be seen. Until then, postmodern men and women must fret over the theft of their sounds much as primitive peoples feared (quaintly, we thought) the theft of their spirits.

The postmodern name game: The term *postmodern* is another one that journalists are using more while perhaps understanding less. We assume that some idea of this word is now widely shared, but the glut of academic discourse on the subject reveals otherwise. We know that postmodernism somehow involves the mass media, the struggle between emergent worldviews and the spread of late-century pessimism among the Western world's middle classes. Beyond that the term is up for grabs, and those who can seize its meaning to explain their own hustles will make more money that those who can't.

Among those lucky enough to be labeled postmodern is the painter David Salle, 34, who recently had a big show at the Whitney Museum in New York. Art critic Kay Larson, writing in *New York* magazine, described Salle as yet another appropriator who confronted "the numbing effects of endless media bombardment" with images "lifted wholesale out of the vast warehouses of modern culture...from television and film, photography, pornography and art history." Larson adds that "the Great Appropriator must have no style; he is merely a vehicle for the rearrangement of images, a kind of auteurish director who splices from the collective eye of his cameramen."

If performance art was a godsend for clever rich kids who never learned to play the piano, then appropriation is a lucky

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